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March 1979 £1

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George Urban talks to Manuel Azcárate

Nirad C. Chaudhuri

Is Hinduism Spiritual?

Walter Laqueur

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Michael Shepherd

The Psycho-Historians

Clive Sinclair

Story

The Alger Hiss Argument

Eric Jacobs, Margaret Stern, Allen Weinstein, Hope Hale Davis, Sidney Hook

Martin Esslin

Scandalising Samuel Beckett

Edited by Melvin J. Lasky & Anthony Thwaite

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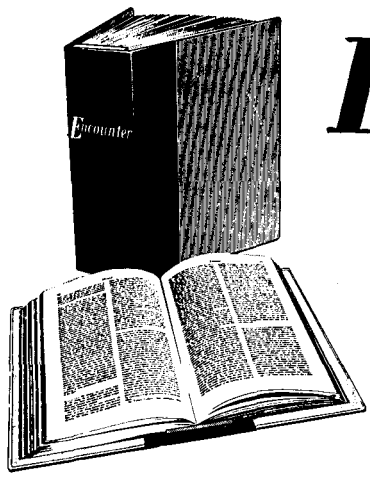

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BERNARD LEVIN writes:

"*Encounter*, which is almost exactly the same age as *The Mousetrap*, never produces an edition without something in it that is well worth reading and not to be found elsewhere; you will be surprised, if you try to think of other magazines which pass both halves of that test every time, at how short the list is. And one of the most agreeable functions of *Encounter* is to act as a forum in which, when a case has been forcefully stated on one side of a question central to our times, other and contrary views are expressed . . . it takes seriously its role as a forum in which the important issues of peace and war, freedom and its opponents, can be discussed calmly, rationally and courteously."

The Times

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Clive Sinclair

The Luftmensh

WHAT IS Joshua Smolensky, private eye, doing in Philip Roth's former room at a colony for writers? In New England, no less.

The answer begins, as do most things in my life, with a knock on my office door. He held the door open so long that the room filled with the stale air that passes for atmosphere in Los Angeles. "Do you recognise me?" said my visitor. "No", I said, "should I?" "Such short memories", he whispered. "Once I was famous." "Sorry", I said. "It doesn't matter", he said. "I'm nothing but a hack now." "Sit down", I said, "you look like a ghost." His face turned from white to green. "That's just what I am", he said, "not a ghost, but a ghost-writer." "Smolensky", I cried, "that's who!" A string of scandalous best-sellers, much praised by critics, then silence, only noted by me because of the coincidence in names. "Tell me", he said, "what is the worst thing that can happen to a writer?" "Run out of ideas?" I said. "No, no, no", he said, "it's far worse to lose your voice. To know that your ideas are not your own. That's what has happened to me. Every thought in my head belongs to Victor." "Who?" "Victor Stenzil, the Yiddish writer", he said. "I have been chosen to ghost his life story." "Never heard of him", I said. "Is he still alive?" "I don't know", he said. "That's what I want you to discover." "Need an ending for your book?", I said. He didn't laugh. "If he is still alive there is hope", he said. "Perhaps he will release me from the contract. But if he is dead I am doomed to be his ghost for as long as I live. Please find him!" "Where do I start?" I said. "The colony", he said.

"In the beginning", said my client, "it was wonderful at the colony. Each day a whole day of uninterrupted writing. No distractions; no visitors, no newspapers, no television. There were eight of us in residence. We lived as a community, and naturally we had rules. We took breakfast and dinner together in a communal dining-room, but between times we were expected to stay in our rooms and write. Of course, conversation at table was lively; work-in-progress was read out to loud cheers and jeers; sometimes we got drunk. Once or twice women were obtained. Yes, everything was going swimmingly until the ninth guest arrived. Victor! What a sight! His hair looked like a hundred invisible hands were trying to tug it from his scalp. Meanwhile, other hands shoved tufts into his ears and up his nose. And what a nose! It hung between his eyes like a giant tear-drop. He introduced himself by reading a poem. Not even one of his own.

I should have died with you,
But I found dying too hard.
Now I do everything to hide with colour
The convulsions of my body and word.

Neither grief nor anger can drown
The guilt of my living on,
My guilt because the flames of Treblinka
Didn't consume me flesh and bone.

We received it in silence. It was not the sort of poem you could cheer. 'That's by Halper Leivick', he said. 'I don't suppose you boys have ever heard of him. Am I right?' Night after night Victor went on, dominating our conversation, till we began to dread the evening meal. Eventually, rather than listen to him every evening, we began to sneak into town for supper." "So what happened?" I said.

"Victor broke the rules", he said. "He knocked on my door in writing-time. From that moment I have not written a word of my own. 'I have chosen you', he said. 'For what?' I said. 'I want you to tell the story of my life', he said. 'You are a writer', I said, 'tell it yourself.' 'I cannot, I am cursed', he said, 'I

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am a wanderer, always a wanderer.' As we spoke in my doorway streamers of breath floated from our mouths, mingled, and became a single cloud. 'Listen to me', said Victor. 'It is my tragedy that the Nazis never reached New York. You think I am crazy? Perhaps. But look at me. What am I? A *luftmensh*. A man of air. Without substance. Possessed by history. Full of dreams and nightmares. All the war I was safe. Until the first survivors arrived from Europe. Oy, the guilt I felt then! I was ashamed. Come summer I wouldn't roll up my shirt-sleeves in case someone saw that I did not have a number on my arm. The mark of Abel! Because I was not a victim I felt like a murderer. I wanted to explain my guilt to you all. But no, what did you do? You ran away to your tootsies in town. Now you will not escape so easily.' 'Why me?' I said. 'Choose someone else.' But the next day a contract arrived from my agent. Which I signed. Don't ask me why. The fact is that Victor grew, in the space of a single day, from an object of irritation into a living obsession. He became my subject, and I his." "But where do you get all the facts from?" I said. "That's the point", he said, "I am inventing his life. And I cannot stop. That's what's driving me mad!" "So where was Victor last seen?" "At the colony", he said. "He vanished that night. Without trace. Leaving all his things in his room."

A BEAUTIFUL FALL DAY. Just cold enough to see the breath float from your body and drift through the still air like ectoplasm. A single hermit thrush sat singing on the picket fence; flute-like notes of joy, chucks of lamentation and a scolding tuk-tuk-tuk. All in the same song. The leaves blazed on the trees like fragments from an exploded patchwork quilt. New England! I checked into the colony as "Smolensky." The girl at reception didn't know one Smolensky from another. Nor did my fellow writers. There is only one difference between writers and detectives; writers invent plots whereas detectives discover them. And pretty soon my comrades were plotting against me. They wanted to know why I never contributed anything to the work-in-progress soirées. So they bribed a call-girl to rob me. I watched as she crept from the bed to the desk and began to search in vain for the booty. My anger mingled with desire as her body grew luminous in the moonlight; but it was business before pleasure, and in a moment I had her spread-eagled on the floor, a collection of moveable parts, which soon confessed its crime. After that incident my colleagues lost patience and began abusing me behind my back. "You know how he made it, don't you?" said one. "Thanks to the Jewish literary mafia. They look after their own." He wasn't really talking about me, he meant the other Smolensky, but I became enraged anyway. I challenged him to a boxing match and gave him a bloody nose. This conduct was not considered becoming from a writer. A Jewish one to boot! Therefore I was expelled from the colony. But I had got what I had come for. I knew what had happened to Victor's belongings.

The red barn stood amid fields of snow, like a bloodstain on a sheet. It was crowded with objects for the auction. Victor's property was Lot 100. In the meantime I nosed around a bit. Maybe it's because I'm a detective, but the place depressed me. In every bundle I could see finished lives. A chest full of precision tools, minute screwdrivers, pointed pincers, and tins, each containing a selection of watch parts; one tin for faces, another for hands, others for glasses, cases, main-springs and all the paraphernalia from which we assemble time. So the local watchmaker had shuffled off the mortal coil, that was obvious. But I also knew what tobacco he smoked, what chocolates he liked, what pastilles he favoured for coughs, colds, sore throats, that he suffered indigestion for many years. No magic, I just read the labels on the tins. Lot 100 cost me five dollars. It consisted of a shaving brush, a pair of old pants and two paperback books. One was a phrase book entitled *Say It In Yiddish*, the other was *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams. The first amused me with its sections on how to deal with Customs and Passport Control; the new arrival was advised to say, "*Awt iz min pahs. Voo iz dehr tsawl-ahmt?*", meaning, "This is my passport. Where is the customs?" I ask you, what country is this where Yiddish is the spoken language? A country of displaced persons and ghosts, not marked on any map. Victor's Utopia. An insight into his aspirations, but no use in pinpointing his whereabouts. However, the second book provided a clue. Victor had marked the first line of the epigraph, "And so it was I entered the broken world." And had written alongside Stanley Kowalski's name in

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the cast list, "A real anti-Semitic Polak, that's what I need."

"HE WANTS TO BE a martyr", said Smolensky. "So does our driver", I said. He drove the Greyhound like the devil was on his tail under the influence of the rhythms and morbid lyrics of the redneck music that he played on his radio. And the further south we went the more reckless he became, jostling with beat-up cars that criss-crossed our path like headless chickens. However, approaching Nashville his mood changed. He calmed down, kept to his lane, and turned off the radio right in the middle of "D-I-V-O-R-C-E." Instead his voice issued from the speakers. "Ladies and gentlemen", he said, "Nashville has one of the densest concentrations of millionaires in the nation. It is the Athens of the South, location of numerous colleges and universities, and site of the Parthenon, considered the finest example of classic Greek architecture and generally conceded to be the most beautiful building ever constructed. It is on your right now." And it was! The whole thing reconstructed on a green hill in Nashville, Tennessee. Representing the South's self-image, as a reflection of that former perfect society, also founded upon slavery. Our bus gathered speed again along the backroads where billboards posted by John Birchers demanded, "Get the US out of the UN." Where signs riddled with bullet holes read, "It is Illegal to Shoot on Highways." Dogs strayed beside the road, and every few miles we passed the body of another mashed into the dust by a careless car; sometimes huge black birds stooped over the corpse like mourners. One lifted its face to reveal the curved beak and naked head of a vulture. A pick-up truck flashed by at a crazy speed leaving the impression of the contents of its open back; two blond boys in dungarees sitting beside a stiffening deer. The land was flat and full of swollen rivers. Wide areas were flooded and deserted save for dead trees that protruded from the water like dislocated limbs. "The land, like my life", said Smolensky, "is out of joint."

We cut across the narrow neck where Lake Pontchartrain filters into the Gulf of Mexico and entered New Orleans. We left the Greyhound near Canal Street and strolled into the Vieux Carré, sensing that tropical hint of violence in the quotidian. A black man dressed in top hat and midnight-blue suit rattled past in the cab of a horse and carriage. His white passengers in the rear craned their necks to catch his commentary. His melancholy face, with its statuesque features, was impassive. But I could read his mind. It was filled with terrible dreams of revenge, of revolution, of white necks bared for the guillotine.

Her elbows resting on the bar of the Bourbon Street club the whore said to her client, "Sometimes, sometimes I look at myself and wonder where my life has gone." A talking blues, dependent not upon inner feeling but on quality of performance; and this girl with her *sfumato* cadences and innocent eyes was a performer and a half. In the background a naked girl swung back-and-forth beneath a giant clock. A living pendulum. At about nine-thirty the jazz band arrived. Old black men who carefully placed their jackets on hangers and patted out the creases. There were no long solos because their lungs were too worn out to sustain the effort; unlike the whore the feeling was there but the performers were weary. As each musician took a few choruses on his own the rest watched and smiled; some stomped their feet, others just sat as though hypnotised by the sound. An elegy for a messiah who never showed. And who is no longer expected. The music expressed those hopes, and its dying revealed their disillusion. I looked around. Only one black in the audience. And an out-of-towner, judging by the Kodak instamatic hanging from her wrist. Thus will the message be carried to the people, as a silent photograph! Old-time jazz does not appeal to young blacks, it reeks of bondage; they shun it like Israelis ignore their Yiddish heritage. At which point, as if in response to my cue, Victor walked out from the wings and joined the band on stage. "So the old *meshuggener* is still alive", said Smolensky. "How did you find him?" "No problem", I said, "I bought *This Week in New Orleans*."

THE PIANIST played a twelve-bar blues and Victor began his monologue. "Which would you rather be", he began, "a warder in a concentration camp or a prisoner? A Cain or an Abel? Let me tell you people something. I used to thank God for the Holocaust. You want to know why? I'll tell you for nothing. Because it gave us Jews the right to sit in judgment on this stinking world. But now I am not

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so sure. Why? On account of Israel, that's why. In our own country we Jews are also not perfect. Now answer my question! Cain or Abel? One or the other!" But before anyone could open their mouths the club was suddenly invaded by a group of black dudes in white zoot suits and young whites in denim duds. They shooed the old musicians from the rostrum and set up their own instruments. "The revolution has come", they announced, "the old order giveth way to the new." Then a member of the combo began to play the bongos while another in an Afro fright-wig chanted.

Jew-Land, On a summer afternoon
Really, Couldn't kill the Jews too soon
Now dig. The Jews have stolen our bread
Their filthy women tricked our men into bed
So I won't rest until the Jews are dead.

"Over here, you black Nazi!" yelled Victor. "Make a start with me." And he ran up to the singer and spat in his face. Was Victor going to become a martyr at last, in this seedy bar in New Orleans? "Come on, you *shvartzer*, show us what a *mensh* you are", he shouted, "stick a knife in my old heart." The naked girl swung to-and-fro below the clock, Victor's spittle rolled down the black man's cheek, and we all stood in silence. But it isn't always that easy to get killed, even in New Orleans. "Shit, I don't want to hurt you, old man", said the singer, "I didn't mean the words literally. Personally, I like the Jews. I'm just sick and tired of hearing how the Jews suffered. Man, you're hogs for punishment. Let someone else get a word in. Shit, we've suffered as much." "In that case, young man", said Victor, "you'd better improve your script. Find yourself a writer!"

"Why aren't you back at your desk?" said Victor. "I want to break the contract", said Smolensky, "I've had enough." "A contract is a contract", said Victor, "you gave your word." "Well, at least stay in one place", said Smolensky, "so we can get it over with as quick as possible." "I told you", said Victor, "I'm a wanderer." "Then I'll wander with you", said Smolensky, "till the book is finished." "This trip could be dangerous", said Victor. "I've heard rumours of a plantation near the Mississippi state line that still keeps slaves. I intend to find it." The old bull-shitter! "Pardon me, gentlemen", said a city slicker who had been listening in, "but I've got a little tale that might interest you. About how I nearly shot a man. Well, this guy pulls up his truck just beside where me and Curtis are loading our guns for a duck-shoot and reaches for his glove compartment—you know, it's kinda sad that nowadays you're so suspicious of everyone—but I can see that Curtis is thinking the same thing, and in a second we've both levelled our guns at the guy. If he'd had a gun in there we'd have shot him in half before he could have twitched. Want to know what was in there? A dead duck. 'Is this yours?' says he. Gentlemen, the moral is plain. It ain't safe to poke your nose into other folks' affairs. Even if your intentions are honourable." "What was that all about?" said Smolensky. I said I would stick with them for a while. My conduct was unprofessional, but I wanted to keep an eye on my namesake.

NORTH OF NEW ORLEANS Victor got caught by a cop pissing in the Mississippi. "What the hell do you think you're doing?" the cop called out of his car window. "Forgive me, Officer", said Victor, "but these days my bladder has no resistance." "Come over here", said the cop. Victor hesitated. "Don't worry", said the cop, "I'm not going to bite you." So Victor approached the battered black and white car. "You're not from around here, are you?" said the cop. "Correct", said Victor, "I'm from a village near Warsaw, in Poland." "No kidding", said the cop, "I was there during the war. Tell you what I remember most about the place. The goats' milk. Used to have it delivered to the camp every morning by an old woman. Till the Russians took control and we were sent packing. I often wonder what became of that old peasant and her goats. I can tell you, I was real sorry when Poland went communist. Believe me, I thank God I'm an American. Though not quite so often since Nixon's fucking caper. And then that Ford. Who did he give us for Vice-President? A billionaire who didn't know shit about us poor folks. Listen, if you say you've got a weak bladder I can understand that, because my bladder's weak too, but what can a man who was born rich know about poverty, tell me that? What we need in the White House is a farmer from around here who was raised in dirt. Now off you go, and try not to pee in your pants." "A man after my own heart", said Victor as we tramped northwards over the rolling lands that seemed to take their

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rhythm from the river.

"Have you boys ever tasted goats' milk? asked Victor. "That's real milk. Milk that don't taste like water. Chock full of fatty globules and flocculent curds. My aunt used to sell the stuff. In the old country." We were sitting drinking beer in the warm winter sun by the banks of the Mississippi. "My father was a rabbi in a *shtetl* outside Warsaw", said Victor, "and my mother was also descended from rabbis. Much good that did either of them when the defeated Russian army passed through the town. After the pogrom I was taken in by my Aunt Zelda. She was a spinster. Made her living from goats. Sold milk and cheese from a little stall in the market square. My job was to milk the goats every morning before *cheder*. I've never been happier. Sitting on the three-legged stool squeezing the milk into my bucket. As a rule Aunt Zelda left me alone with the goats except on those mornings when the nannies were especially fidgetty, then she would come down with me and lock away all the billies. This was in accordance with an injunction she had found in the *Shulchan Aruch*, the Code of Jewish Law; namely, 'One should not look when either animals, beasts or fowl have intercourse.' In response to my enquiries concerning this behaviour, she quoted, 'The thought of fornication only comes into a mind devoid of wisdom. So stop asking questions, go to *cheder* and learn.' Being a spinster Aunt Zelda had peculiar ideas about sex, which she revealed to me soon after my *bar-mitzvah*. She informed me that my private parts had been given me by God so that I might know when the devil was filling my mind with evil thoughts. At which point my penis would grow hard. 'One is forbidden to willingly harden himself or to bring to himself the thought about women', she quoted. If this should occur, God forbid, I must open the *Torah* and save myself with holy thoughts. One morning, to illustrate what would happen to me if I gave in to temptation, she let the billy-goats loose and made me watch their junketings astride the nannies. Afterwards she showed me their eyes. 'Look at those pupils', she said, 'slanted like the devil's.' Despite the warnings I could not control my dreams. At night the devil appeared in the guise of voluptuous females until I succumbed and stained my sheets. Naturally Zelda was horrified at the sight. So many lamentations you would have thought Jerusalem had fallen. Fortunately the *Shulchan Aruch* had an appropriate passage. 'A man should be very careful to avoid hardening himself', she read, 'therefore it is forbidden to sleep on one's back with his face upward, or to sleep with his face downward, but to sleep on his side, in order not to come to hardening himself.' Thereafter I suffered dreadfully from insomnia, fearing to drop off in a proscribed position." "Carry on", said Smolensky. He was joyfully copying down every word.

"Despite my aunt I got a bit of an education", continued Victor, "thanks to the *mocher seforim*, the book pedlars, who passed through from time to time and always stopped for a glass of milk and a gossip. They told me stories of the world outside the *shtetl*. For instance, I learnt how students in Germany were burning all books written by Jews. And I didn't even know that Jews were allowed to write books! I became the best customer of the *mocher seforim*. I swallowed every word I read, just as I had swallowed Aunt Zelda's teachings. And when I discovered how she had misled me I hated her. Instead of fasting on *Yom Kippur* I went to dances and ate pork. Then one day, without a word, I left for America. The Nazis were in power in Germany and I knew what they had planned for the Jews. I took what Hitler said literally. You see what I am saying? I left Zelda behind on purpose. I didn't try to persuade her to come with me. I condemned her to Treblinka! Now do you understand my guilt? Enough!"

NEAR ST FRANCISVILLE we happened upon a plantation house shining out from within a grove of live oak and crape myrtle bearded with Spanish moss, its jalousied galleries and colonnaded balconies back-lit by the cascading light. The place appeared to be haunted by a Southern belle who beckoned us inside. "Would you care for the tour?" she said. "Why not?" said Victor. "The house has been restored", she said, "by the combined forces of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America. This lady here was our inspiration." She pointed to a pen-and-ink portrait framed on the wall. "Miss Eliza Pirrie. The young lady of the house when it was at the height of its glory.

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She was a pretty thing, don't you think? Many people see a resemblance to Julie Nixon." On the road again. "History never repeats itself", said Victor, "but I wouldn't be surprised to see another Nixon in the White House. Julie, this time. Swept to power by the Nixons, the Eisenhowers and the followers of a resurrected Eliza Pirrie. Mark my words." "That's my job", said Smolensky.

There was an isolated plantation six miles below the Louisiana-Mississippi state line. Across a railway track, rusty with lack of use, down a bumpy unpaved road, over a wooden bridge and there was the rambling plantation house. A fading notice read, ACCOMMODATION. We knocked. There was shouting within, then a boy emerged, his teeth in braces. "What do you want?" he said. "A room", we said. "Follow me," he said. He led us through a gate at the side of the house, to where a second gallery ran off at right angles. He opened one of the doors in this gallery. Inside was a grand room with oak panels, old prints on the walls and lead-light windows with wooden shutters. "Look through the windows", said Victor, "see how their panes distort everything. That's because the slaves who had to make them couldn't produce perfect glass." "You like the room?" said the kid. "Magnificent", said Victor, "just what we were looking for. You'll be able to work here all right, eh, Smolensky?" So the kid left us. Because he was not suspicious of us I became suspicious of him. Why no registration? No payment in advance? No number on the door? And no key? But Victor was more interested in a ledger laid open on the desk. It contained an inventory of the slaves. All neatly displayed. Column one, name; column two, age, weight and brief description; column three, price; column four, present value. "Look at that date", cried Victor, "this book is still being used!"

THE SKY WAS STAINED RED where it touched the land. The winter silhouettes of the trees lurked like moving creatures. We sat on our porch watching the darkness fall. There was no denying the edgy fascination of the place. Indeed it was this vaguely dangerous charm that made it so sensational. Everything seemed magnified; the house, our isolation, the moon as it rose. Pale nocturnal creatures snuffed the ground, owls hooted. Slowly the sky sucked up the moon. Until it shone so brightly that all the buildings on the plantation began to glow; and even the distant slave quarters glimmered. "It was one family per hut", said Victor, "didn't matter if there were two or twenty in the family." Suddenly screams filled the air. Real blood-curdling screams! My perceptions went into overdrive. I began to imagine impossible things. The trees seemed to be creeping closer. New sounds. Not imagination. The chink of metal on metal. Through the night I saw the shimmer of chains in motion. Moving towards us. And then as if being formed out of the darkness itself there emerged a huge Negro. Naked except for the chains around his ankles. It was as though the past had come to life. "It can't be a ghost!" hissed Smolensky. "No way", I said, "ghosts don't bleed." "What is your name?" said Victor. "Abel", replied the slave. Then two more faces floated out of the darkness like white balloons. It could almost have been a party for there were orange flashes and bangs. Except they were guns going off. And the game, as the man in the club had warned us, was kill the intruders. So we ran like rabbits. But Abel slowed us down, with his chains and his wounds. And they caught us by the deserted road. "Thank your friends, nigger", they said, "on account of them we're going to kill you." They would have too if Victor hadn't stepped in the way and got shot instead. "Don't die!" begged Smolensky.

Victor was groaning in the dirt, bleeding to death. Abel was gasping for breath. Me and Smolensky were petrified. Awaiting our turn in front of the firing squad. When in the distance we all saw the blue lights of the Highway Patrol. As a rule I don't expect much from cops. But our saviour just happened to be Victor's fellow capriphile. So Victor lived. What's more he persuaded those Southern cops that a plantation worked by slaves was operating under their noses. The slaves were freed. Smolensky's contract was cancelled. And Victor was a hero. He played all the clubs with a bandage wrapped around his head. With his new partner. They called themselves "Cain & Abel." "Once we were slaves", they said, "but now we are free. As free as air!" Smolensky, on the other hand, is learning Yiddish.

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Euro-Communism at its Spanish Turning-Point

GEORGE URBAN continues his exploration of the meaning of "Euro-Communism" in a long conversation with MANUEL AZCÁRATE, a leading Spanish Communist spokesman in the current election campaign. . . .

1. Socialism, True and False

BOTH YOU, *Señor Azcárate, and Santiago Carrillo have repeatedly told us that the groundwork for Euro-Communism was laid by the 1968 Czechoslovak reform movement. Would I be right in saying that Euro-Communism owes its existence directly to the Prague Spring? Or did Prague merely act as a midwife to a development that was well under way irrespective of the reform movement?*

AZCÁRATE: When the Czechoslovak Communist Party began to stir in January 1968 twelve years had passed since the 20th Soviet Party Congress and Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin. We had been given a warning by Soviet party history to be sceptical about "models" and think out afresh the future of Communism in Western Europe. We had been made conscious that the socialist experience in Russia and Eastern Europe was replete with highly negative examples. [We realised that we had been profoundly deceived by what the Soviet comrades had told us about the state of civil liberty and the purge trials, the role of the police forces and the entire apparatus of repression under Stalin.] We had many friends among the victims of Stalinism—Arthur London, for example—from whose evidence we could piece together the truth about Stalin's terror in all its beastliness.

We were in this frame of mind when news reached us, towards the end of 1967, of a ferment

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"SPAIN is not Portugal." The differences were clear, as the Portuguese Left, in an outburst of revolutionary romanticism, narrowed the base for a new post-Salazar democratic society until the Stalinist leadership of Cunhal's Communists frightened Lisbon back into moderation and constitutionalism—while in post-Franco Spain the democratisation proceeded in a step-by-step gradualism as Santiago Carrillo's Communist party (unlike Portugal, or France, or even Italy) trumpeted the virtues of a new Communist ideal for Western Europe, purified of its Eastern distortions, free, humanistic, pluralistic, etc.

Is Euro-Communism only a shrewder form of the strategy and tactics by which Marxist-Leninists establish their tyrannical "Dictatorship of the Proletariat"? or is there a new kind of Revisionism at work here which is beginning to change the real nature of the far Left? The Spanish voter, still new to the polls and free choice, will in the coming elections be making up his mind. Will Euro-Communism emerge as a major political force (comparable to the mass-parties of Marchais in France and Berlinguer in Italy)—or will it, for all the new noises, still be taken as a totalitarian danger and be confined to splinter-party proportions?

GEORGE URBAN'S *previous exploration of Euro-Communism—the long conversation with Lombardo Radice which caused so much international controversy—appeared in the May 1977 number of* ENCOUNTER. *His discussion with Manuel Azcárate (who is the International Secretary of the Spanish CP's Central Committee and editor of the Party's theoretical journal* Nuestra Bandera*) was, like the previous one in Rome, tape-recorded, transcribed, edited and double-checked. And thereby lies a problem.*

When is a quote not a quote? There was, frankly, trouble when Lombardo Radice, a loyal and responsible Party comrade, felt the need to alter his spoken words on basic issues. Yet another sincere change of mind, or strategy and tactics again? "Caveat lector." ENCOUNTER *felt this was the heart of the matter: the public interest could only be served by documenting the ideological process of "editorial self-censorship." We published the original formulations as well as the subsequent qualifications (on supporting NATO, helping the Russians, maintaining neutrality, etc.). We saw no reason to support a stratagem of obliterating whole minutes of a tape-recording—not in Nixon's case or anybody else's.*

So we have again obliged the interviewee by publishing his corrections, having received from him "editorial discretion", and we also include the original remarks in square brackets.

M.J.L.

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in the Czechoslovak Party, of Novotny's eventual fall, of Dubcek's election and the reform movement's increasingly successful attempt to infuse democracy into the system. This was a breath of fresh air for us, and we shared the Czechoslovak comrades' exhilaration. Prague confirmed what we had been vaguely feeling for some time but did not clearly articulate—namely that the degeneration of Soviet socialism into Stalinism was due to certain specific reasons such as Russia's economic and social backwardness and the absence from Russian history of any democratic tradition.

Czechoslovakia, therefore, was not so much a shock for us as a *recognition*. Here was a promise to renew socialism in the spirit of the same democratic values in which it was born. Czechoslovakia was clearly the only fully *Western* country in the Eastern camp—the only one in which respect for civil liberties, tolerance and compromise had sunk deep roots. We realised that whatever happened in Czechoslovakia was of immense interest to us and to all Communists in Western Europe. [Any success the Czechs managed to achieve in reforming Communism was a challenge to *our* ability to reform it; *their* reaction to Stalinism was a prophylactic warning to *us*.]

We were, therefore, not only interested in the Prague reform movement, but were enthusiastic supporters of it. I remember articles we wrote in *Mundo Obrero* and *Nuestra Bandera* (of which I am the editor) expressing our conviction that the Czechoslovak reforms were [leading us back to the] showing an authentic pattern of socialism.

—Your party was in exile in 1968. Were you in touch with the Czechoslovak Communists—were you reliably informed about the mood of the people?

AZCÁRATE: Yes, we were in exile in France, but we had in Czechoslovakia about 150 Spanish Communists who had been expelled from France in the early 1950s, when our Party was outlawed there, too, and settled in Czechoslovakia. We were, of course, in close touch with these comrades. They had jobs in different parts of the country and we kept getting reports from them—trustworthy people who had fought in the Spanish Civil War—of what was happening in Czechoslovakia. When Moscow began to send word around that Prague was heading for a counter-revolution, we were, therefore, in a good position to nail the lie; we knew from our comrades that the people were supporting Dubcek and there was no sign of any counter-revolution.

Until January 1968 our relationship with the Czechoslovak leadership was intermittent, but after the changes of January we were in close touch. I was myself in Prague on several occasions and established friendly ties with Smrkovsky and Dubcek. We were, therefore, fully in the picture and knew what the Czechs were trying to do.

—Let us go back for a moment to the idea that the Prague Spring was only a midwife to Euro-Communism . . . because it seems to me important to establish as precisely as we can that some kind of Euro-Communism was, embryonically at least, in existence well before Prague—not only among the Italian Communists but elsewhere too. Santiago Carrillo says in Euro-Communism and the State: *"Czechoslovakia was the straw which broke the camel's back and led our parties to say:* No. . . ."
What camel? What parties?

AZCÁRATE: Our criticism of Soviet policies predates the Prague events. But while we could sense that all was not well in the Soviet Union, for a long time we tended to believe that our doubts were themselves open to doubt. We inclined to think that Khrushchev's revelations and the changes he initiated would be much more far-reaching than they in fact proved to be. We had protested against Khrushchev's dismissal; we made it clear that we were gravely disturbed to see that, despite the 20th Party Congress, the leader of the Soviet Party could be removed from his posts in [a *putsch*-like fashion] a manner which was nothing short of a conspiracy. But until the 1968 Prague events, our criticisms were tempered by a feeling that perhaps our information was partial and our judgment therefore open to errors.

What made the Czechoslovak events decisively relevant for us was the wholly internal nature of the Prague reforms: the changes had come about as a result of a vote *in* the Central Committee. We were witnessing a process which was entirely consistent with the socialist system and with the structure of the Communist Party. When, therefore, Soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia to suppress a leadership which had been democratically elected within the framework of the socialist system, our tentative criticism of the Soviet system was at once transformed into frontal repudiation: "This was intolerable." It was from then on clear to us that there was a basic contradiction between the policies pursued by the Soviet leadership under Brezhnev, and our own conception of what socialism was about. *This* was the straw that broke the camel's back.

WHEN CARRILLO *says that the facts circulated by the Russians about Czechoslovakia under "internationalism" were "light-years away from reality"—what precisely does he mean?*

AZCÁRATE: Carrillo was referring to Soviet allegations that Czechoslovakia was in danger of returning to capitalism; that the Czechoslovak leaders were traitors; that the Prague reforms were the work of German agents; that American arms had been found near Czechoslovakia's Western border, and so on. I remember reading of a Party meeting (6 May 1968) to commemorate the 150th

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anniversary of Marx's birth, at which Cestmir Cisar, Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, said that the Leninist interpretation of Marxism was one-sided and the legitimate interpretation of Marx in our time should lead to a democratic socialism.

Well—Cisar got attacked for his speech in *Pravda* in a quite despicable fashion. [It was alleged that he was trying to disarm the fight against imperialism, that he was a revisionist and a nationalist. This wild misrepresentation of the truth is what Carrillo had in mind when he said that the Soviet case was "light-years" away from the facts. He was also implying that these untruths were being used to justify certain "emergency" measures which the Soviets had taken to suppress Czechoslovakia. I was in Paris at the time, and so was Carrillo. We were in frequent touch with representatives of the Soviet Party who tried to win our support for their version of what was happening in Czechoslovakia. We absolutely refused to give it to them, and we told them so unambiguously. But we did more than that.] You will remember that in July and August 1978 Soviet manoeuvres were taking place near the Czechoslovak borders, and rumour was rife that these were a prelude to the invasion of the country. Well, we told the Russians that if they invaded Czechoslovakia we would publicly condemn their action.

I remember talking to Ponomarev in Budapest at the preparatory meeting for the 1969 Conference of European Communist Parties and protesting against *Pravda*'s attack on a well-known leader of the Prague Spring. [I had just returned from Czechoslovakia and I remarked to Ponomarev that there were fears in Prague and among West European Communists generally that the Soviet side was preparing to invade the country and suppress the new Czech leadership. Ponomarev was most indignant. "How dare you impute such an intention to us? What sort of an attitude is this? Of course, we are a little worried, but how dare you say that we want to invade Czechoslovakia?" A few weeks later these rumours turned out to be true. I did, incidently, find Ponomarev an uninformed and not very intelligent man, and I was wondering how a person with such obvious failings could be in charge of vital matters in one of the world's two most powerful states.]

[*—Was Ponomarev's attitude shared by other leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries?*

AZCÁRATE: It was—to the extent that Ponomarev really believed what he said and the others also believed what Ponomarev said. But that is, of course, begging the question.]

—Did you suspect duplicity?

AZCÁRATE: I did, but I could not be certain. But to answer your previous question: after the Cierna and Bratislava meetings we thought that the crisis was being defused, so I decided to take a holiday in Poland—Carrillo went to the Soviet Union. Until then we had been in Paris keeping a daily tab on the Prague developments, but we now thought there was a respite. Before going to the Baltic Coast, I spoke to one of the Polish leaders. I told him, too, about the rumours that were circulating, and I said that we as a Party would publicly denounce any military move against Czechoslovakia. He, too, was indignant and strongly denied that any such thing was being contemplated or indeed imaginable.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia took place while I was still in Poland. I decided to return to Paris immediately, and as I was making my seat reservation the Polish Party authorities suggested that they explain matters to me before I left the country. And they put forward the name of the same man I had seen before. My answer was: Yes, I would be very happy to talk to him, but my own and our Party's attitude was unchanged—we were going to make a public denunciation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Whereupon I got my seat reservation, but the Party leader in question made no further attempt to see me. I suppose it would have been highly embarrassing for him to argue the *opposite* of the case he had argued to me some ten days earlier.

—Did you think the Polish leaders shared the Soviet view of the Prague events?

AZCÁRATE: No, my impression was that the Polish Communists were, by and large, witnesses, at worst accomplices, rather than convinced supporters of the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

[*—But wasn't there a certain "Schadenfreude" among the Poles . . .* " You *thought you could get away with something we couldn't—now we are in the same boat again"?*

AZCÁRATE: Here and there one could detect signs of that feeling among the rank-and-file. But I don't think the Poles, either in the Party or outside it, actively hoped for the failure of the Prague Spring. The population as a whole was certainly hoping that it would succeed for understandable reasons of its own.

—Talking to Ponomarev in Budapest, was it your impression that, his protestations notwithstanding, he knew that preparations were being made to put down Czechoslovakia?

AZCÁRATE: I could not be absolutely certain whether the decision to invade had been reached (although, with hindsight, we now know that by

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July the preparations were well advanced). But the impression I got from our conversation was that, despite his ostensible indignation, he did not consider the suppression of Czechoslovakia as something totally objectionable under certain circumstances.]

HOW WOULD YOU, *as a senior leader of the Spanish Communist Party and the man responsible for the Party's foreign relations, describe the character of the 1968 invasion?*

AZCÁRATE: Well, an invasion is an invasion, and aggression is aggression whoever commits it.

It has been argued that the decision to invade was reached under the pressure of worried generals on predominantly military grounds. Others have thought that the Kremlin hawks, with Shelest in the role of the vulture, were mainly responsible. There may be truth in both theories, but the real reasons must be sought elsewhere.

A socialist society of the type which the Czechoslovak Communists were working for—one based on freedom, democracy, the consent and support of the people—was seen to be a threat to the Soviet system. It would have spread, it was feared, to the other East European countries and eventually to the Soviet Union itself. In the Manichean world of Soviet thinking Prague assumed the features of the Devil—and the Devil has to be destroyed. You don't sup with him, you don't argue with him—you kill him.

Already during those brief months of the Prague Spring the Czechoslovak example was exerting a noticeable influence in Eastern Europe—a most positive influence, in our view, because it was showing that it *was* possible to change socialism, Soviet-style, in sensible and non-violent ways.

[Prague, moreover, was not merely a theoretical threat to the Soviet system and to Soviet hegemony—it was a *personal* threat to a small group of men who exercised power in this enormous land by bureaucratic despotism. These men knew that if the ideas generated in Prague were allowed to mature and to spread, they would themselves eventually have to find a different legitimation for holding power, or indeed face the prospect of losing power.]

Their violent reaction to the Prague reforms was, of course, dressed up in ideology. They did not say: "Our rule is threatened by the Czechs, therefore we will crush them." No—they said: "Anyone who is a real Communist and not a traitor of Communism must respect the Soviet interpretation of Marxism-Leninism and accept the Soviet model of socialism; and those who do not must face the consequences." Whether the Soviet leaders actually believed their own propaganda is difficult to say and historically unimportant. The fact is that they identified [their personal rule] the cause of socialism with the closed Soviet system. Nothing outside the system is tolerated. That was the basis of their attitude to Prague, and that is their attitude to Euro-Communism today.

—You are talking as though Stalinism still existed in the Soviet Union 15 years after the death of Stalin and 12 years after the 20th Party Congress, whereas we know perfectly well that for the man in the street Stalinism in 1968 was a fast receding memory—no more.

AZCÁRATE: Certainly the mass repressions had ceased by 1968, certainly there are no longer millions languishing in camps, but the Stalinist conception of the state—the *cult* of the state as the joint embodiment of a powerful bureaucracy, a powerful police force and a powerful army—continued, and continues, to be the basis of the Soviet system. This is a conception in which the "good" *of* the people is interpreted by [a ruling élite] a small group of leaders, which then imposes this "good" *on* the people by the apparatus of the state. It is, therefore, preposterous to say that there have survived in the Soviet Union certain "residues" of Stalinism. No—the dogma of the supremacy of the state apparatus and the continuing repression testify to the survival of a basic form of Stalinism. The invasion of Czechoslovakia was only the most tangible and repulsive demonstration of the strength of its staying power.

2. *"The Spanish People Would Fight"*

SANTIAGO CARRILLO *expressed his puzzlement at the phenomenon you have described in these words: "If all states are instruments by which one class dominates another, and there are no antagonistic classes in the USSR, there is, objectively speaking, no need for repressing the other classes; who, then, is dominated by this state . . .?"*

AZCÁRATE: The answer is clear. Far from having given birth to a free democratic society which might serve as a model to others, the Soviet system has become an instrument of [serving a small group of rulers who have subjected the entire Soviet population to their] bureaucratic despotism.

—Carrillo goes one step further when he argues that some of the formal *features of Stalinism are "similar to those of fascist dictatorships." Would you agree that there still exists this* **formal** *similarity (Carrillo, to be fair to him, stresses that in substance the two have always been different)?*

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AZCÁRATE: Yes, I would—the formal similarities are obvious. But we don't have to go back to Stalin's rule to draw damaging comparisons. Even today, political liberty in [most] some capitalist countries is [much] more extensive than it is in the Soviet Union—to say nothing of Russia under Stalin. Compare, for example, the citizen's ability to obtain information in the capitalist West and in the Soviet Union. Without any question, his freedom to receive and impart information is [infinitely] greater [under capitalism] in several capitalist countries than under the Soviet system—and this freedom to inform and to be informed is, after all, the first condition of democracy.

While our party was in illegality in France we found ourselves in the *absurd* situation that, in our disputes with the Soviet Party, we were able to inform our Party members both of our side of any argument and of the Soviet reaction to it. But the Soviet Communist Party, which has been in power for 60 years and rules the world's largest country, did not feel strong enough to permit *its* public to find out what we were saying!

—You were, in fact, freer in clandestinity in an oppressive capitalist society than your Soviet comrades in an ostensibly free and ostensibly socialist society?

AZCÁRATE: Not to put too fine a point on it—our discussions with the Soviet Party were not at all, and *are* not at all, discussions between two Communist *parties*. On the Soviet side the argument has always been regarded as the private property of a small nucleus of leaders, whereas on our side the debate has been, and is, wide open.

—I notice that when Carrillo was attacked in Novoye Vremya *in July 1977 you circulated among your members both the text of the Soviet article and your answers to it, among them your own in* Mundo Obrero. *Is this measure of internal freedom part of your established practice? It would not seem to be in line with "democratic centralism" which you have not repudiated.*

AZCÁRATE: The freedom of informal discussions has been a well-established practice in our Party for many years; we had it in our underground existence and, of course, we have it now. Let me give you another example. When *Partiinaya Zhizn* used my Report to the plenum of the Central Committee of our Party, in September 1973, to attack the Party leadership and the independent line we had been pursuing in our foreign policy, we published (in illegality) a leaflet giving all our members the entire text of the Soviet attack as well as our own arguments, so that everyone could judge for himself. The problem is, as I've said, that after 60 years in power the Soviet Party does not feel confident enough to tolerate any view other than its own. Its current stance on Euro-Communism, too, cannot be graced with the word "argument", for it consists of the brandishing of dogma, threats and condemnation. These are methods worthy of the Inquisition—not those of a debate conducted with another Communist Party.

—Does all this betray the weakness or the strength of the Soviet leadership? Looking at the decision-making scene in Washington—where decisions are frequently lost among a plague of decision-makers, and where, when decisions are finally made, they are frequently undercut or undone by free-wheeling dissenters of every kind—isn't there a case for appreciating the advantages of the Soviet leadership's brutal but effective methods of government?

AZCÁRATE: I don't know enough about Washington to make a comparison, but I consider Soviet dogmatism to be a sign of great political and ideological weakness. The system is closed. It reverberates to nothing outside its own parrot-like recitation of the virtues of itself and the crimes of others. This means shutting out the world as it really is.

To give you one example: Marxist thinking is paralysed in the Soviet Union. The home of creative Marxism today is France, Italy, and even the United States—not the Soviet Union. For many years now no fresh Marxist ideas of any kind have come out of the USSR. What you have in the Soviet Union is *government* thinking, which betrays great political weakness. [The only type of undertaking in which the Soviets are not weak is the military field—power—but that would take us into another discussion.]

WOULDN'T YOU SAY, *though, that, with all their limitations and dogmatism, the Soviet leaders were, in 1968, acting in the Soviet, and perhaps ultimately in the universal Communist interest, for if they had allowed Czechoslovakia to take off, the whole of Soviet "socialism" would have been jeopardised?*

One is, of course, familiar with the argument that by suppressing Czechoslovakia Soviet interests were protected at a very high price, the price being the accelerated disintegration of what was left of the unity of the World Communist movement and, more particularly, the rise of a new strain of resistance to Soviet leadership: Euro-Communism. But, then, politicians' choices are usually between unpleasant alternatives, and the Soviet leaders can hardly be blamed for having opted for the survival of the Soviet system rather than put their money on the unity of the movement which, by 1968, could not be guaranteed against further erosion in any case.

AZCÁRATE: I don't agree. The Czechoslovak experiment was an absolutely decisive move in the history of socialism in that it tried to give socialism an effectively modern and democratic dimension [and put its creative focus back into Western Europe]. It was a move to rescue socialism from the general backwardness which it inherited from

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the historical accident that the first socialist revolution had taken place in semi-oriental, Czarist, under-industrialised Russia. [The suppression of Czechoslovakia was a particularly odious demonstration of the fact that the backward and anachronistic force of Soviet socialism has all the power in the world to prevent, if necessary by force of arms, the progressive strain in socialism from making headway. To the extent that the occupation of Czechoslovakia has killed or heavily retarded this development, we can only say that it has dealt a blow to the whole socialist movement, including, of course, its Soviet variant.]

—Hugh Seton-Watson, the distinguished British historian, has said that the occupation of Czechoslovakia was an act of "Russian imperialism"; and Milovan Djilas, too, has described (in The Unperfect Society) *the Kremlin's attitude to Eastern Europe as "Soviet pan-Russian imperialism." Would you agree with these judgments?*

AZCÁRATE: "Imperialism" for me [for us in the Communist movement] has a very specific meaning. It denotes the monopoly stage of capitalism in which the division of the world among the leading capitalist powers has been completed. The label therefore does not fit.

—Would you describe the Prague Spring as a form of a national liberation struggle?

AZCÁRATE: I would hesitate to do so [because such struggles are directed, in our conception, against colonial imperialism]:—the principal aim of the Prague reforms was to inject democracy into socialism.

We have to take a large view. We believe that the October Revolution was an event of world historical importance—the first move in the historical process *away* from capitalism *to* socialism; *away* from a society of exploitation *to* a superior civilisation. But this process was inhibited by Russian backwardness, by Russia's lack of a democratic tradition and all the other impedimenta of Russian history. If the first socialist revolution had taken place in *Germany* rather than Russia, under the guiding influence of people such as Rosa Luxemburg, then the whole evolution of socialism would have taken a different direction, and the whole European scene would be different today. But the fact that socialism was born out of a Russian, rather than a West European, matrix, does not invalidate the significance of its birth.

The general curve of socialism is unbroken, but *within* it there have been serious setbacks, such as Stalinism, which gravely threaten the speedy attainment of real socialism. But let us remember that the French Revolution, too, was followed by many years of Bourbon rule and the passing triumph of reaction; but such instances of a backlash did not invalidate the liberating message of the French Revolution, much less kill it.

—You are saying that in due course Stalinism too will appear to have been a regrettable deviation—no more. It did not, in your analysis, rise out of the nature *of "socialism." Here is where non-"socialists" part company with your interpretation.*

AZCÁRATE: I don't want to excuse Stalinism, much less justify it. On the contrary, I feel very strongly that enormous personal mistakes and crimes on a vast scale were committed in the Soviet Union under Stalin, and that human rights are still being violated and terrible injustices are still being committed there. At the same time we must remember that the October Revolution was (as I've said) a break with the capitalist system which had caused the sufferings of the First World War, and a reaction against Social Democratic policies which had given support to that imperialist war and underwritten colonial oppression. The October Revolution marked the coming of a new world-order although, under Stalinism, its progressive content suffered a profound degeneration. The process which started in October 1917 represents a continuous advance in the history of human affairs, well attested by the various national liberation movements. But the future is open—we don't know how the Soviet Union will behave.

[At the same time I am convinced that if "existing socialism" can change course and return to its democratic moorings, then the catalytic significance of the 1917 October Revolution will stand out in even stronger relief than it does already. Of course, we don't know what will happen in the Soviet Union. But should there be an evolution in Soviet society analogous to the one we saw in Prague in 1968, then—yes—it would make perfect sense to argue that, despite the degenerations which have rendered socialism suspect in Soviet hands, the process which started in October 1917 represents a continuous advance in the history of human affairs. But the future is open, and we don't know how the Soviet Union will behave.]

LET ME RETURN *for a moment to the question of whether the rising (as you assume) curve of socialism would have been put at risk if the Czechoslovak reforms had not been killed by Soviet intervention. The burden of your case is that, with all its grave imperfections, Soviet "socialism" is nevertheless socialism* in posse. *I would therefore argue with the Soviet leaders that, as the Soviet Union is the only power base in the world of any kind of socialism, its defence has to be given absolute priority over any other consideration. Take the Soviet base away, and the world's Communist parties—pro-Soviet, non-Soviet, and probably even anti-Soviet—*

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are left without the political and ideological assurance of which you have just spoken: that in Russia in 1917 the curve of "socialism" began to rise from point zero and has never stopped rising. And if you believe, as you clearly do, that the curve of a rising "socialism" is an irresistible and irreversible fact of history, then you have to stand up for its Soviet variant, if it is under attack, because in the Soviet Union alone has "socialism" been firmly (if not always successfully) established.

This is, of course, an old Comintern argument to which I do not subscribe; but I can quite see that if one accepts the ideological parameters of Communist reasoning (which I do not), the Soviet leaders' case for the "normalisation" of Czechoslovakia is a powerful one.

AZCÁRATE: I firmly believe that the *contrary* of the reasoning you have cited is true. Let us imagine that the Soviets had tolerated the Czechoslovak reform movement. What would have been its repercussions? The Western Communist Parties would have been stimulated by the Prague example. The Social Democrats too would have been strongly influenced by it, for the possibility of bridging the gap between Communism and Social Democracy would not have been lost on them any more than it would have been lost on us. A powerful and united Left might have emerged throughout Western Europe. Furthermore, in Eastern Europe, where tensions were (and in some cases are) high, the Czechoslovak model would at once have created a demand for sweeping changes—for freedom, popular participation, pluralism. . . .

—in other words, the East European glacis, and probably the Soviet system itself, would have disintegrated, as the Soviet leaders correctly feared. . . .

AZCÁRATE: . . . you can only use the word "disintegrated" pejoratively if you think that the existing system is worth preserving. *I* would say, on the contrary, that the East European countries would have advanced towards an immeasurably better form of socialism. Of course, this would have meant various changes, especially in the Soviet leadership, though not the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact, because the leaders of the Prague Spring never questioned the military alliance—indeed, they frequently expressed their determination to remain loyal to it. But far from "disintegrating" in the sense in which you have chosen to use the word, the East European countries would have drawn closer to a healthier, viable, up-to-date and democratic form of socialism.

All this was frustrated by the Soviet intervention [because the leaders of Soviet bureaucratic socialism saw their personal power threatened].

—I don't think the Soviet leaders were worried only about a different *kind of "socialism" establishing itself in Eastern Europe—although that too must have given them enough cause for worry—but, rather, about the total collapse of* any *form of socialism, first in Eastern Europe and then very probably in the Soviet Union itself. And this would have meant the end of any kind of hegemony—Soviet or Russian. The risks of suppressing Czechoslovakia were, in the short term in any case,* slight; *the risks of* not *suppressing Czechoslovakia were, in the short as well as the long term,* enormous.

AZCÁRATE: *If* one accepts your hypothesis that the proliferation of the Czech example would have eventually led to the elimination of any kind of socialism, then the *logic* of the Soviet response—that is, the invasion of Czechoslovakia—cannot be questioned from the point of view of crude Soviet power interests.

There are two points to be made here. First, I do not go along with the idea that ends justify means. We must, therefore, absolutely stick to the principle that the invasion of Czechoslovakia was wrong purely and simply because it was an act of aggression. Second, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that the proliferation of the Czech example would cause socialism to collapse in Eastern Europe or in the Soviet Union. There was, on the contrary, a very real possibility that a democratic and modern type of socialism would survive and prosper. Undoubtedly the developments in Prague would have provoked changes elsewhere, but these would have been well within the range of choices socialism offers [and I am fairly certain that if Euro-Communism manages to let down roots in Western Europe as a significant political force, changes of this kind *will* come about, both in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, under the impact of Euro-Communism].

—Your strong words about the invasion of Czechoslovakia seem to imply that the Czechs, in your view, ought to have offered armed resistance. I draw the same inference from what the leader of your Party said about the Spanish Party's attitude to the hypothetical case of a Soviet invasion of Spain. *Speaking on French television on 13 July 1977, Santiago Carrillo warned that if Soviet tanks ever reached Spain to squash Spanish Euro-Communism in government, the Spanish people would fight. Do you share this view?*

AZCÁRATE: On your first question—we have often been asked whether we disagreed with Dubcek's record on any point, and our answer has always been: Yes—*we* would have fought. We consider that in the situation in which the Czechoslovak Communists found themselves on the night of 20–21 August 1968 they ought to have offered armed resistance.

Of course, militarily this would have been very difficult; it would have entailed a great deal of suffering [and might have set off a major conflagration]. But we are very conscious of the lessons of Yugoslavia: In 1947–48, when the Yugoslavs got themselves into deep trouble with Stalin and were expelled from the Cominform, the Soviets did not invade Yugoslavia because Tito let

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it be known, and Stalin fully realised, that the Yugoslavs would fight. The Yugoslavs' toughness warded off Soviet intervention, the result being that the Yugoslav experiment—self-management, pluralism of a kind, liberalisation in culture, and so on—has been able to go ahead and has become an important milestone in the development of socialism.

On your second question: Yes—in the unlikely event that Soviet tanks should invade Spain to crush a Euro-Communist régime, the Spanish people would fight. But we are, of course, dealing here with a very remote hypothesis.

—In the aftermath of the 1978 French general elections, Jean Elleinstein wrote in Le Monde *(13 April 1978) that Soviet society is not only not an exemplar which France would want to follow but that it is an "anti-model" of socialism. Would you agree with that?*

AZCÁRATE: I would—indeed we have gone further than that. We have stated (and I have said personally) that the Soviet Union is *not* a socialist state. In Elleinstein's view Soviet society represents a form of arrested socialism. We, on the other hand, consider the Soviet state not to be a socialist state at all but rather one which features many of the worst features of capitalism and oppression.

3. On Liberties, "Formal" and Real

ONE IMPORTANT *achievement of the Prague Spring which Soviet intervention did not completely stultify was the federalisation of the Czechoslovak state and of the Communist Party. There is now a separate Communist Party for Slovakia, though, paradoxically, there isn't one for the Czech lands. The reformers' intention was to federalise the Party in the same way as the state. This would have resulted in two national Communist Parties—each with its own Central Committee, Presidium, and Secretariat—which would then share power with the federal Communist Party for Czechoslovakia. The plan could not be fully carried out because it fell foul of the Soviet model—the USSR has no Communist Party for the "Russian lands", therefore Czechoslovakia was not allowed to have a Party for the Czech lands either.*

The Spanish Communist Party's thinking appears to be moving on parallel lines. Although your Party has been (nominally at least) no more willing to repudiate "democratic centralism" than the Czech Party, it has embraced federalism as one form of democratisation. In your 1974 programme you call for the self-determination of Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia, and, in fact, ancillary Communist parties already exist in all these regions.

I remain a little puzzled. Nations and nationalities, in the Marxist view, are transitional phenomena which will, as capitalism is destroyed, give way to a single world community and a single culture. Support for the national ambitions of small nations is to be given only in those cases (and then only temporarily) where a small nation's struggle for independence coincides with the advance of the proletariat as an international force destined for world leadership. There has never been any question of supporting national ambitions as an act of justice and democracy.

Lenin was very frank on this point:

"A struggle against any national oppression—unreservedly yes. A struggle on behalf of any national development, of 'national culture' in general—unreservedly no. . . . Marxists, it stands to reason, are hostile to federation and decentralisation. . . . A centralised large State is an immense historic step forward from medieval disunion to the future Socialist unity of the whole world, and otherwise than through such a State . . . there is not, nor can there be, any path to Socialism."

I gather that you repudiate these views of Marx, Engels, and Lenin—that the Spanish Communist Party's support of the self-determination of the Basques and Catalans is more than a temporary expedient subject to the interests of the class struggle?

AZCÁRATE: Our Party supports every minority nation's right to self-government, including of course the use of its language and the maintenance of its culture. However, the political realities in Spain do not make it possible to grant self-determination for the Basques or the Catalans. This could only be achieved in agreement with all Spanish political forces, including the far Right and the Army, and *their* agreement could not be obtained. The new Constitution foresees *autonomy* for these regions, and we support this with the caveat that we have not given up the principle that ideally every nation, no matter how small, has the right to self-determination.

—You are supporting the idea of national autonomy within a genuinely democratic state. . . .

AZCÁRATE: . . . Yes, and the Spanish consensus is very encouraging on this question: there will be regional home-rule for Catalonia, the Basque country, and so on. The all-important point is the new Constitution—not the fact that we have written wonderful principles on a piece of paper (nothing could be easier), but the provisions we have made to safeguard the Constitution from arbitrary applications, distortions, benign or malicious neglect. Our Constitution enshrines a declaration of human liberties, and we have seen to it that no subsequent legislation can invalidate it or

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superimpose on it "interpretations" of any kind. It has often been said by Communists that the freedoms of bourgeois society are merely "formal" liberties. Well, bitter experience has taught us not to be so disdainful about "formal" liberties. They tend to be not so formal after all, and they matter enormously.

The new *Soviet* Constitution, too, guarantees individual liberties, national independence, even the right of the national minorities to secede from the Soviet state—but what is the value of such liberties if the operative limitation in the Constitution renders all of them subject to the requirement that they do not run counter to "socialism"? The "formal" liberties of bourgeois democracy compare favourably with such liberties as exist in the Soviet Union.

But one has to be fair: we must admit that the October Revolution had, during at least the early period of socialist power, a liberating influence for the more backward Soviet nations and nationalities. If you compare their level of education, the development of their language and culture, not only with what these were like under Czarism but also with the continuing backwardness of comparable Asian nations and nationalities outside the Soviet Union, then Soviet policies in these [limited] fields must be assessed as positive and progressive.

At the same time, the lack of liberty which characterises the entire Soviet system has had a particularly poignant and malicious impact on the freedom and even the national consciousness of the Soviet nationalities. The initial responsibility for reducing national rights to a formality was Stalin's. Lenin was aware of the problem. In one famous exchange he told Stalin, the Georgian, that there was no worse pest than a non-Russian's Great-Russian nationalism.

—"Scratch a Russian Communist and you will find a Great Russian chauvinist", Lenin said at the 8th Congress of the Communist Party in 1919.

AZCÁRATE: Yes—alas, the Russification process did not stop with the death of Stalin. The feeling that they lack national liberty is widespread to this day among the Soviet nationalities.

THE PROBLEM, THEN, *is the one we keep coming back to: democracy respected and practised in all its aspects. The problem of minorities of all kinds, including nations and nationalities, tends to fall into place if the system is open to self-correction. In Eastern Europe, the current difficulties of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania are a case in point. . . .*

AZCÁRATE: . . . Yes, I was virtually brought up on the Hungarian-Rumanian minority question because my father was Director of the Department of Minority Problems in the League of Nations, and he spent a great deal of his time worrying about and travelling to Transylvania. But let me take this on a wider ground. What makes me anxious as a Communist is that the socialist transformation of society is obviously not enough to solve the problems of nationality. This is a serious matter for us because we always believed that once a society's economic and social structures have undergone socialist change, public consciousness would follow suit and the archaic rivalries between various nations would automatically cease. This is not happening. The question is obviously more complicated.

—But aren't you rather begging the question? The problem persists because the "socialist transformation" is, as you have just said, incomplete or non-existent. The Western countries have at least better ways of dealing with minority problems, as the cases of Scotland, Belgium and, oldest of them all, Switzerland, well demonstrate. In all these instances the heat was taken out of potentially explosive situations because there was enough elasticity in these genuinely parliamentary democracies to give way to the devolution of power when devolution was seriously demanded.

AZCÁRATE: Yes—our emphasis must be on the universal freedom of the polity. But I am convinced that socialist society *can* contribute to solving the question of national antagonisms and has already done so. What impresses me about Yugoslavia is that, parallel with the socialist transformation of society, the various Yugoslav nations have learned to live together in relative peace and harmony. Diverging interests and tensions remain—those are normal—but we can certainly say that the hatreds and hostilities which marred Yugoslav society before the War, and then led to the fearsome massacres of the civil war during the Second World War, have ceased.

—The democratisation of Yugoslav society is a tricky problem because it is bound to mean adding fuel to the national self-assertiveness of the constituent nations. I cannot see how Yugoslavia could be further decentralised and "pluralised" without the emphasis of decentralisation and pluralisation becoming an emphasis on national separateness, if not separatism. It was only a few years ago that many Croatians, including Communists, demanded under Tito *a separate household management for Croatia and indeed separate representation in the UN. What proportions will such demands assume* after *Tito, even if the Soviet Union were not to encourage the centrifugal ambitions of the constituent Republics? And there is no reason to assume that it will not, seeing that current Soviet policy is both to fuel national separatism and to let it be known in Belgrade that Soviet assistance would be readily available if the unity of the state were threatened. (Soviet "help" was indeed offered at the time of the 1971 Croatian crisis, as Tito has revealed.)*

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AZCÁRATE: I am not saying that the problem of the integration of the various Yugoslav nations is *solved*; it is *contained*—and that is a great step forward. I am confident that the national interests of Yugoslavia as a whole will prevail, even if Yugoslav socialism is further liberalised and decentralised—as it should be.

What we are trying to do in Spain is a useful pointer to the *limits* of decentralisation. It is not in the rationale of a modern economy to break up the unity of states if diversity within a unitary state can be guaranteed under the rule of law and under conditions of freedom. An unchecked "cantonisation" would lead to demands for the independence of every region, then every municipality, and eventually every village in the realm. The disintegration of the first Spanish republic in 1873 was due to this sort of a process. The new Spanish Constitution guarantees the devolution of power to the Basques, Catalans and the other Spanish nationalities and regions—extensive self-government, cultural and language rights—without touching Spain's economic and social integrity as a modern state.

My reading of the Yugoslav situation is that the Yugoslavs have—*with* mistakes and many shortcomings—succeeded in combining decentralisation, which militates for small size, with the requirements of modernity, which militates for large-scale organisation. Compared with the non-solution of the nationality question in the Soviet Union and the *magyar* question in Transylvania, the Yugoslav example has much to recommend it.

4. *Moscow & the Spanish Elections*

ONE OF THE encouraging facts about Europe in the 1970s has been the peaceful transition of Spain and Portugal from fascist types of dictatorship to democracy. It has proved possible for the Spanish Communist Party to emerge from illegality and become a well-accepted member of the political life of Spain. The American "imperialists" did not object. Indeed they quietly assisted in encouraging and speeding up the process of democratisation.

No parallel transition has yet proved possible in Eastern Europe. What kind of a transformation would Eastern Europe have to undergo to match the Spanish example? To stick to Czechoslovakia in 1968: it would have been necessary to demolish, with active Soviet cooperation, the whole of Novotny's dictatorship and to permit it peacefully to transform itself into a liberal parliamentary democracy, with parties of extreme right-wing flavour also admitted as legitimate contestants for power. Nothing of the sort was allowed, much less encouraged, to happen.

What makes a healthy body politic different from a tired or diseased one is that whereas the former can assimilate a great many a-systemic and even hostile agents, a sick body politic hasn't the power and adaptability to do so. If this is accepted—on what grounds (other than amour propre*) do Communists insist that "socialism" represents a superior order to bourgeois democracy? Doesn't the comparison between Czechoslovakia and Spain show the opposite to be true?*

I can see no curve in history leading mankind from the October Revolution to "socialism." What I **can** *see is an irregular graph taking us in and out of despotisms of varying severity, with the occasional irruption of free régimes providing the exception and the contrast.*

AZCÁRATE: To take the concrete example of Spain. Spain's transition from fascism to democracy was due to two interrelated factors: the growing opposition of the entire population to the fascist régime, and the Spanish capitalists' increasing awareness that fascism was breaking down. All this encouraged the more enlightened elements inside the system to initiate certain reforms which eventually whetted popular appetites for more radical ones. In other words, it was not the merit of capitalism that Franco's fascism or the Salazar régime were democratised. On the contrary: seeing their isolation and impotence in the face of popular opposition, the Spanish and Portuguese capitalists had change *forced* upon them and, of course, they eventually tried to go along with it in the slowest and smoothest possible way.

—Whatever the background, the Americans did nothing to prevent the Communist Parties of Spain and Portugal from gaining a very respectable foothold in what used to be fascist dictatorships wholly committed to the cause of anti-Communism.

AZCÁRATE: Yes—the Americans probably felt that broadly based democracies in the Iberian Peninsula would serve them better than having to deal with countries torn by uncontrollable tensions. But your examples are one-sided: what about US aggression against Viet Nam and American intervention in Santo Domingo and Chile?

From the examples you have given—the cases of Spain and Portugal versus Eastern Europe, especially Czechoslovakia—one can only make the limited inference that Eastern Europe is dominated by a system that is not open to change, that will have no truck with freedom, and that has, in the case of Czechoslovakia, not hesitated to use military force to keep itself afloat. All this is wholly bad and we do not hesitate to condemn it. But it has nothing to do with the merits or demerits of

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socialism, for such a [the Soviet] system is *not* socialist.

—But this asymmetry between what is possible on the NATO *side of the equation and what is possible in Eastern Europe does, you will agree, disturb the power balance? A few years ago Portugal was very close to becoming a Soviet base right in the middle of* NATO*'s Atlantic defences—and there is no question but that the US and the rest of* NATO **would** *have put up with it. The Soviet government, on the other hand, would not tolerate even a watered-down version of "socialism" in* its *sphere of influence.*

AZCÁRATE: I don't accept this balance-of-power argument—it is a *Soviet* argument! I don't agree that we have capitalism on *this* side of the East/West divide, and socialism on the *other*. I see socialism as a world-wide process which manifests itself on *our* side in certain socialist structures such as trade unions and workers' parties, mostly in opposition, and on the *Soviet* side in a distorted type of "socialism-in-power" which sub-divides into certain political institutions which are socialist in name only, and others, especially in the economy, which have a more profound socialist content.

But I emphatically cannot share the idea that the world is and will remain divided into two camps. That two military blocs exist at the moment is an unfortunate fact, and we have clearly stated in our recent *Theses* that the survival of these blocs is due more to the interests of Soviet and American prestige and hegemony than to military necessity. (This point, incidentally, greatly incensed the Soviet Communist Party's representative at our Party Congress.)

You are, of course, right in saying that the repulsive example which the Soviet Union had set in 1968 in Czechoslovakia was not followed by the Americans in Portugal. Nevertheless, when in January 1978 the Italian Communists seemed close to entering the government, the Carter Administration warned against it, which was every bit as scandalous, and effective, as military intervention would have been. After all, the Americans have their fleet in the Bay of Naples—their words cannot be misunderstood.

The interests of those broad strata of people who want socialism require that the military blocs should be reduced, that the siege-mentality between them should cease, and a new international system should be called into being. The progress of the socialist transformation of West European—and East European—society assumes, and will further add, to the exhaustion and irrelevance of bipolarity.

BUT DISREGARDING *for a moment the narrow interests of the Spanish Communist Party and of Euro-Communism generally, would you not agree that the West is at a permanent political disadvantage in its dealings with the Soviet Union because the internal structure of democracy will not permit certain crude power-political measures, such as the military occupation of a defecting ally?*

AZCÁRATE: I don't think this is a weakness. It could indeed, be a sign of strength: it might mean that the countries in NATO have sufficient political flexibility to deal with their problems in ways very different from those obtaining in Eastern Europe.

[They have enough economic self-confidence, enough political and social cohesion to keep their system in fair working order without having to resort to military interventions. *Per contra*, there is no such flexibility in the Soviet bloc because the hegemony of the Soviet Union is based neither on the agreement of the peoples who live under Soviet rule nor on any economic or social strength that could keep the Soviet-ruled territories in a state of good repair. The Soviet substitute for an acceptable social order is crude military power. Soviet dogmatism is *empty* of content. The Soviet Communist Party is a public-relations office churning out ideological pap. The Western world has no need or room for any such thing. With all its faults, it has preserved sufficient flexibility to survive the strains of its internal contradictions.]

—Is it in the Soviet interests to have the Italian, or French, or Spanish Communist Party in power.

AZCÁRATE: I cannot judge what is and what is not in the Soviet interest, but it seems to me that at the present time the Soviet leadership has no desire to see any of these parties in office.

—Would they upset the delicate equilibrium of what is left of détente?

AZCÁRATE: Possibly, because in the Soviet view *détente* equals the status quo. The Soviet leaders want one thing above all: complete and permanent immobilism. They probably feel that a socialist Western Europe, in which the Euro-Communist parties would undoubtedly play a part, would exert a kind of influence on Eastern Europe which a capitalist Western Europe cannot exert. So what would they stand to gain? They can obtain vast credits from the West under the *present* arrangements. They can get technological transfers, grain shipments—everything without letting themselves in for the dangerous experiment of promoting Communists in office in Western Europe.

—Perhaps they can get all these things only because Communists are not *in office in Western Europe and the capitalist system is strong enough to keep the loans and supplies flowing?*

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AZCÁRATE: [There may be something in that (*laughter*). Some years ago Fidel Castro told us: "We must hurry up enjoying all the good Spanish ham we can get from you because when socialism comes to Spain it will be very difficult to find any!" (*laughter*)] Well, the economic success of capitalism leaves a lot to be desired these days!

—Moscow, then, doesn't want to see you in office?

AZCÁRATE: I think not.

—You are not just saying this because it is good for your electoral image not to be seen to be supported by Moscow?

AZCÁRATE: Not at all. The Spanish Socialist Party, for example, is now very friendly to the Soviet Union, and when Gonzales was in Moscow he was received much more warmly than Carrillo. Gonzales must be assuming that his acceptance by the Soviet leaders is a vote-catcher rather than an invitation to electoral defeat in the sense that he can now show his party to be acceptable to both the US and the Soviet Union.

—The Soviet attack on Carrillo came shortly after the 1977 Spanish elections, not before. Had the Russians wanted to help you, they would have attacked Carrillo during *the election campaign. But they didn't—which bears out your reading of Soviet intentions.*

AZCÁRATE: I am familiar with this theory but I think it is a little far-fetched. True, we did ourselves say that we were annoyed to see that the Russians did not attack us *before* polling day. But I do not credit the Soviet leaders with sufficient intelligence to imagine that they would have thought of *not* attacking us before the elections in order to keep down the Spanish Communist vote. The Soviet leaders [sad to say] do not possess enough sophistication to reason like that. They genuinely believe that when they *attack*, they cause *harm*; when they do *not* attack, they *refrain* from causing harm.

—Very revealing.

AZCÁRATE: I should imagine they held back during the election campaign because they wanted to forestall any accusation by other prehistoric Communists of their kind: "How *could* you attack a Communist Party before a difficult election?!" That is as far as their sophistication goes.

5. The Spectre Haunting Euro-Communism

YOUR CRITIQUE *of the Soviet System is clearly far-reaching—would you agree that we might, with a slight perversion of Marx's words in the Communist Manifesto, cogently claim in 1978: "A spectre is haunting Euro-Communism—the spectre of Communism, Soviet-style?"*

I am not inverting Marx's words frivolously—I really believe, on the evidence of what you and other Euro-Communists have told me, that the only environment in which Communism can develop and prosper is capitalism. It certainly cannot begin to do so under Communism, Soviet-style.

AZCÁRATE: Well—what our liberal critics frequently forget is that the freedom we enjoy under capitalism has been dearly paid for. Their criticism of us concentrates on one point: "You supported Stalinism—you supported Soviet repression—therefore you are the enemies of freedom!" There is no doubt that we badly misjudged the nature of the Soviet system, and to that extent this criticism is justified. But, at the same time, we were in the forefront of fighting fascism. The freedoms which now exist are due to the sacrifices we have made. The capitalist system never experienced difficulty in ruling with fascist methods. Capitalism has never voluntarily surrendered its power to exploit and to oppress. It conferred universal suffrage on the working people only under pressure from Chartists and socialists. It was only under the impact of the struggles of the working class, the October Revolution, the defeat of Hitler and the resistance of enslaved peoples that the colonial era was brought to an end. The human rights record of capitalism was very poor until trade unionism and popular pressures gradually wrested a measure of liberty from the capitalist system. In other words, if we are in a position today to fight for a just society in a capitalist environment, our ability to do so has not been bestowed on us by a benevolent capitalism.

Now—to your contention that "the spectre haunting Euro-Communism is the spectre of Communism, Soviet-style." Yes, you can put it like that, but perhaps it would be closer to the truth to say that we are trying to fight off [an oppressive "father-complex"] the heritage of Stalinism. We adopted a resolution at our recent Congress which expresses satisfaction over the repudiation and defeat of Stalinism while also stressing that certain residues of Stalinism are still alive in our ranks and must be fought until we are absolutely free from them, both in our institutions and in our thinking. This, we contend, is the precondition of building socialism in the spirit of Euro-Communism.

—I am intrigued by your conception of a bloc-free international order. Your scenario, if I understand you

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correctly, is broadly speaking as follows. A Euro-Communist type of socialism advances to the point of taking power in Western Europe. The same mixture undermines the Soviet type of "socialism" in Eastern Europe. Euro-Communism in Western Europe causes the North Atlantic Alliance to disintegrate; Euro-Communism in Eastern Europe does the same to the Warsaw Pact and Soviet hegemony. With bipolarity gone, Europe—and perhaps the world—advances to a shared "socialist" order.

Now I can well conceive of the collapse of NATO *if Italy or France should embrace Euro-Communism. It is entirely possible, indeed it is probable, that the American people would not understand why they should go on supporting an alliance that was originally set up to defend the West against Communism but has now admitted Communists into its ranks. But I cannot see the Soviet Union packing its bags in Eastern Europe on the parallel argument that "if the East Europeans no longer believe in our system, let them look after their own interests! . . ."*

The net *effect, therefore, of the progress of Euro-Communism would be the collapse of* NATO and *the survival—and probably the enormous extension—of Soviet hegemony.*

AZCÁRATE: The socialist transformation of society is a broadly desired objective in Western Europe: the Communists want it, the Socialists and Social Democrats want it, and several parties of Christian inclination want it too. I am, therefore, not foreseeing *Communist* governments installing socialism in Western Europe, but broad coalitions in which the Communists—and, as I hope, the Euro-Communists—would play a part. The political and ideological over-spill of such a development would reach far beyond Europe, rendering the world's bipolar preoccupations increasingly irrelevant.

Would the Americans have reason to worry? I don't think they would. They would hardly want to "do a Czechoslovakia" to the Italians or French to keep them in line. The NATO alliance would fall apart, but this would be a gradual process and would not happen in a vacuum. It would give Europeans and Americans a chance to rethink the whole American/West European relationship and put it on a new and sounder footing. There is room here for entirely new forms of cooperation.

Eastern Europe would also change [as the libertarian strand in socialism got the better of the Soviet variety and the economic strains between Moscow and the East European capitals began to weaken Soviet control.] How would it change? Frankly I don't know—what I do believe strongly, though, is that the days of Soviet military intervention are over. The last ten years have seen some of the East-Central European countries [notably Hungary, Poland and in a different sense Rumania] carve out for themselves considerable areas of relative freedom from Soviet cultural, economic and political pressure.

—Visiting Hungary, for example, one senses that the "Iron Curtain" is more tightly drawn between the Soviet Union and Hungary than between Hungary and the West.

AZCÁRATE: All in all, then, I would venture the opinion that the advance of Eastern Europe to a democratic and free type of socialism, of which we can, here and there, already see some evidence, would be unlikely to result in Soviet repression. In other words, the military blocs would eventually disappear and the bipolar relationship give way to multi-polar relationships in which the Third World, China, as well as the Soviet Union, the US and Europe would play their parts. I foresee a new world equilibrium.

—But don't you think that the Euro-Communists would be the chief victims if "socialist" governments came to power in Western Europe and the Americans lost interest in maintaining West European security? For what, in fact, would happen? With NATO *in ruins, the Americans gone, but the Warsaw Pact (as I assume) intact, the "self-Finlandisation" of Western Europe would be inevitable.*

Your "socialist" governments would, then, come under severe pressure, either directly from the Soviet Union, or, as an act of pre-emptive surrender, from their own ranks, to get rid of their Euro-Communist members as the principal obstacles to good relations with the Soviet Union. If there is any lesson to be learned from Soviet history it is that Moscow is always more willing to collaborate with suitably cooperative Christian Democrats and even Social Democrats than with heretics inside the Communist movement. In other words, for Euro-Communism to survive, you need American protection.

AZCÁRATE: Here is where we differ. You see the world in incorrigibly bipolar terms. Your scenario assumes that Soviet hegemony will continue to exist and be forcefully exercised. In my conception there will be a strong Third World, a strong non-aligned movement, a strong China to throw their weight into the scales and change the world balance of power. I see a pluralisation and democratisation of international relations where you see the old pattern persisting.

BUT, SURELY, *yours is at best a very long-range forecast?*

AZCÁRATE: Long-range, or possibly not so long-range. There is nothing fanciful about imagining a Western Europe in which Euro-Communism contributes to the erosion of rivalry between the superpowers, in which the importance of the military blocs is diminished, in which every country, emphatically including the small ones, is fully independent and free from crippling entangle-

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ments. I can see such a broadly socialist Western Europe conducting fruitful cooperation—in economic relations, technology, culture, and so on—with the United States *and* the Soviet Union: a dynamic kind of coexistence rather than one merely based on the absence of war; one in which the whole problem of disarmament, too, could at long last be squarely tackled.

We have to bear in mind that the concentration of nuclear weapons in the hands of the two Superpowers—the nuclear terror—has to some extent immobilised them; but this stalemate is also creating fresh opportunities for the rest of the world to make its weight felt. We intend to use these opportunities.

—You have stated that the Spanish Communist Party stands for common European defence. . . .

AZCÁRATE: Yes—we do. . . .

—. . . against all-comers?

AZCÁRATE: Against all-comers.

—I suppose your plea for a common European defence has to be seen in the context of Carrillo's observation:

> **"What I cannot understand is how the USSR can prefer Western Europe to be in NATO—in a certain manner under the control of the United States—to an independent and autonomous Europe such as we propose. This forces me to think that the existence of NATO Europe, controlled by the United States, justifies a second Europe on the other side, controlled by the Soviet Union."**

—Would I be right in thinking that your common European defence would be facing Eastwards—towards the USSR?

AZCÁRATE: It would be facing in all directions, including the East.

—I am still curious to know whether you would agree that a Euro-Communist party in office would be more in need of the protection of the Western alliance than other parties. This is certainly what many Italo-Communists think, and I am assuming that you agree with them even though you have, so far in this conversation, not said so. If your answer is a tacit "Yes", I wonder why your Party is opposed to Spain joining NATO?

AZCÁRATE: NATO was created more than 30 years ago under the conditions of the Cold War. No country has joined it since its inception. If Spain joined now, the whole concept of the world divided into military blocs would be reinforced, which is not our objective. Also, if NATO were strengthened, the Soviet bloc would have to react in some way, and that could spell a new crisis—in Yugoslavia for example. Our interest is not to provoke a sharpening of the role of the military blocs but rather to defuse it.

Clearly, Spain, stretching as it does from the Pyrenees to the Balearic Islands, occupies a strategically key position. But we are satisfied that our national security is sufficiently guaranteed by our own armed forces—and so, in fact, are the armed forces themselves. Entering NATO would be giving unnecessary hostages to fortune. In any case, we have already a number of major US bases on our territory, and we have an agreement with the US covering military [cooperation] matters. The Spanish Communist Party does not question either—we accept them. We propose to do nothing to weaken America's strategic position. We do not want to change the existing balance between the United States and the Soviet Union.

[Coming to the crux of your question: we do not, of course, like the military division of Europe but, in an imperfect world, it undoubtedly carries certain helpful features. NATO has created a zone of security in Western Europe which shields those countries too which are not members of the alliance. We do therefore enjoy indirect protection against the possibility of Soviet intervention. This is a positive fact about NATO.]

★

WE BEGAN this conversation with the impact of the Czechoslovak events on Euro-Communism. What would you, as a Spanish Euro-Communist, say to the Czech people on the 10th anniversary of the suppression of the Prague reform movement?

AZCÁRATE: We had this anniversary very much in mind when we recently invited Frantisek Kriegel[1] to join us at a meeting specially arranged in his honour in Madrid. He was not allowed to leave Czechoslovakia, but he sent us a message explaining his situation. The final speech at this meeting was made by myself, and I said in the name of the Spanish Communist Party that we were looking forward to the establishment of liberty and justice for the Czech people.

The destiny of Czechoslovakia runs parallel with our own. We both suffered from the evils of fascism—both the Czech and the Spanish Communists were cruelly deceived by the bureaucratic misrule of Stalinism. In 1968 we hoped with the Czech people that the Prague Spring would result in the sweeping democratisation of [the Soviet type of] socialism, and we are deeply indebted to them for their example. We want to repay this debt by not losing sight of our solidarity with them in their struggle for democracy and national independence.

[1] A prominent, Jewish-born, member of the Dubcek leadership and a special thorn in the flesh for the Soviet Union in August 1968.

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Promises

The bright posters like dandelions
bloomed suddenly in unexpected places—
telegraph poles, the back of road signs,
the arch of a bridge—with promises
of jugglers, high-wire artistes and clowns;
also a zoo and a fortune-teller.

A tent swelled in the river fields
attended by lorries and coloured caravans.
Bouffant ladies tipped out the dregs of tea
and Edouardo, the deadly thrower of knives,
lipped a fag before the night's performance,
a dark man about to come into our lives.

They upped early next morning and disappeared
leaving the grass flattened by the river;
easier to go while we were still asleep.
Their posters stuck around for months, unweathered,
still showy with untold fortunes, mementoes
full of their promises which we had to keep.

Peter Denman

Original View: 1820

Framing a solvency
of London parkland,
trees extend their
gilt-edge branches.

Struck at the heart
a current silver—
Reason drifting
on its safe investment . . .

Distant terraces,
a balanced landscape,
God in a heaven
minted by the Crown.

Largess of England,
sovereign gold
whose worth is shadow
starting at our feet.

John Mole

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Nirad C. Chaudhuri

The Paradox of Hindu Spirituality

Reflections on "a Religion to Live By"

I ADDRESS MYSELF to those who, either in India or in the outside world, take an intellectual interest in Hinduism in all its greatness and strangeness as the product of a particular kind of mind in a particular environment. My analysis is not meant for those who go to Hinduism from some personal emotional pressure, or to put it more bluntly, for those who seek in Hinduism what they feel they do not find in the religion into which they were born, or simply an anodyne for psychological malaise. I have some hard words to say about Hinduising Occidentals.

Yet I have not written on the assumption that the religion can only be a subject of detached intellectual interest, without implications for life as lived in the present age. For one thing, no one can deal with India, or understand the social and cultural life of the people of the country, without a knowledge of Hinduism, which has influenced the behaviour even of non-Hindus. Next, religion still remains a great issue for mankind, even though it is in a shambles in the contemporary world, and Hinduism is a great religion of a particular kind. An account of it might lead to a better understanding of the religious urge in man, which is innate.

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His best-known book, "The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian", remains a modern classic. Among his other works are: "A Passage to England" (1959), "The Continent of Circe" (1965), and biographical studies of Clive of India and of Max Müller. His present article is based on chapters in his latest book, a full study of Hinduism, shortly to be published by Chatto & Windus. His controversial article on the nature of "fascism" and the régime of Indira Gandhi was published in the November 1976 ENCOUNTER.

I am actuated by this conviction, although I lost faith in the tenets of Hinduism and indeed in all established religions long ago. On account of this conviction, I have read and thought about this religion and also other religions all my life, and I have observed the practice of Hinduism at first hand. My book, put in its final shape on the day I completed my eightieth year, is the product of that life-long preoccupation. However, the study of Hinduism is in such a confused state that my account of it must be regarded as very tentative, only as the starting point of a new approach to it.

HINDUISM has been credited with an exalted, rarefied, and esoteric spirituality in the West, and it is this Western myth of Hinduism which has attracted to it both sincerely religious people and pedlars of religious charlatanry.

I describe Hinduism as a means of living in the world with the help of supernatural agencies, and I suggest that the Hindus never took any other view of their religion. But the significant point is that Hindu spirituality so far as it has any existence can quite naturally be brought within the worldly framework of the religion. It is this which gives to Hindu spirituality its special quality.

But the notion of spirituality has itself to be defined, and it is not identical in all religions. Just as the current conception of religion is derived from Christianity, so is the current conception of spirituality. In it the notion has reached its full development from the seminal utterances to be found in St Paul in such phrases as "spiritual gift" (Rom. 1:11), "ye which are spiritual restore such a one" (Gal. 6:1), "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12), or "to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6). This kind of spirituality is concerned with what is called soul, an entity quite distinct from the body, in which it only sojourns temporarily. Starting from an antithesis

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between the *carnal* and the *spiritual*, between the *flesh* and the *spirit*, Christian spirituality has travelled a long way. It has a long history behind it as well.

Hindu religious sentiment remained true to the original motivations of spirituality, which was to become free from all the restraints imposed on man by Nature. Thus Hindu spirituality is a pursuit, not of beatitude, but of power. In Sanskrit there is no word for spirituality, nor was there any in any modern Indian language until the notion was introduced through the English language. Then with a grotesque and illogical disregard of its original meaning, a Sanskrit word (*adhyātmik*, concerning the self) was made an equivalent of "spiritual" in English.

This has never been understood by Occidental writers who have dealt with Hindu spirituality. I might illustrate the failure by referring to a famous story by Kipling, that of the saint Purun Bhagat. The story was based on fact. In it the Prime Minister of an Indian princely state, with an outstanding record of public service, becomes a hermit and devotes himself to religious meditation in the Himalayas, living only on the food brought to him by the people of a nearby village. One night he is awakened by the tremors of a landslide and rushing out as a man of action saves the villagers. On this, Kipling's comment was:

> "He was no longer the holy man, but Sir Purun Dass, K.C.I.E., Prime Minister of no small State, a man accustomed to command, going out to save life."

This was all wrong, for in Hinduism the distinction does not exist. In it the minister and man of action Purun Dass, and the saint Purun Bhagat are the same man in two characters and roles, complementary to each other. In the ultimate analysis, Hindu spirituality is interwoven with the cosmos. It is the Old Guard of the world, always held in reserve to be launched into action when a serious crisis arises which cannot be met with any mode of rational action open to man. Or, to vary the metaphor, in his spiritual activities the Hindu is like the dynamo which generates electricity, and in his worldly life the motor which expends it. Hindu spirituality and Hindu phenomenal existence are inseparable. They stand together.

HOWEVER, A RESERVATION to this general statement has to be made due to the presence in the observable features of Hindu spirituality of an element of spirituality in the current sense, that is to say, of the kind which is mainly a creation of Christianity. This shade of spirituality is more noticeable in the simple forms of Hinduism preached by the popular prophets. It is, however, an extraneous feature which has remained in Hinduism in its standard form for a long time and has been reinforced twice in the recent centuries.

Partly, this spirituality is a survival from the original form of *bhakti*, in which *agape* had not been transformed into *eros*. Partly, it was also revived by the impact of Islam. This type of spirituality is commonly found among those Hindus who remain conscious of the unseen God who is never worshipped formally but still remains the ultimate God of all Hindus. This God remains a person and receives devotion, and yet he is not invested with a human form.

Awareness of this God and devotion to him were powerfully reinforced among the Hindus as a result of the preaching of Christianity by the missionaries. The Hindus, especially those of the upper castes, rejected the religious system of Christianity, but absorbed a good deal of the idea of the Christian God. This amplified the idea of the unworshipped God and strengthened the devotion to Him to such an extent that what the Hindus precisely felt about him before Christianity came to India cannot be recovered from their spiritual life today in so far as it shows a similarity to Christian spirituality. But there is no uncertainty in respect of the religious status given to the men who exhibit this religious attitude by the Hindus in general. They are regarded as pious men, but never as holy men. In order to be endowed with that status all religious Hindus have to be spiritual in the Hindu sense, that is, either seekers or possessors of supernatural powers. This attitude to holiness is so deeply established that even those holy men who deprecate or even despise the supernatural extensions of their religious life often have to keep up the appearance of being workers of miracles for the sake of status or livelihood.

IT MUST ALSO BE KEPT in mind that the Hindu spirituality which is truly Hindu, that is, when it is a pursuit of power, is not of a single type. The most obvious contrast is to be seen between its introvert expression and its extrovert expression. The first is seen in the Way of Knowledge—the *Jnana Marga*; and the second in the Way of Action—the *Karma Marga*. Both are important aspects of Hindu spirituality and have to be examined more closely.

THE INTROVERT FORM, which is the creation of the Way of Knowledge, has to be considered first, because it is this which has given to the Hindus their current reputation for spirituality. This, too, never broke with the original motivation of Hindu spirituality, i.e. the desire to overcome the limits to human existence and to be free from all the limitations on human power imposed by nature. A prayer in one of the oldest of the *Upanishads* voices this aspiration: "Lead me from non-being to

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being." In the same *Upanishad* the wife of a sage declares: "What should I do with anything which does not make me immortal?" To the Hindus truth is what exists.

But in their quest for immortality and indestructibility through the Way of Knowledge the Hindus did not create a transcendental world in which human beings could have eternal life. They looked for indestructibility, not simply for themselves but for the whole cosmos, and hit upon the idea that behind all the manifested phenomena which were subject to change and therefore also to destruction, there existed, consubstantial with them and yet inaccessible to the senses, an unmanifested, attributeless, unchangeable and all-pervasive element which was eternal and indestructible. They also formulated the corollary that phenomena were only particular parts of a general and absolute reality. This idea, arrived at so early in the history of human civilisation, was akin to that which has been discovered by modern physics. By its adoption they avoided the setting up of an unresolvable antithesis and conflict between an absolute and eternal reality and transient cosmic phenomena accessible to the senses. This must be regarded as the highest achievement of the Hindu Way of Knowledge so far as it made true knowledge its aim.

THE HINDU RISHIS OR SEERS to whom the perception of the absolute reality is attributed gave utterance to a wide variety of notions, some of which are extremely crude. These would justify one's regarding them as no higher in knowledge and insight than the medicine men of primitive peoples. But they also set down feelings and ideas which came from a sensibility akin to that of Wordsworth. The expressions of these feelings and ideas scintillate like precious stones in a bed of common rock in the writings attributed to them. These utterances are very much like poetry, if they are not a particular kind of poetry in themselves. It should be kept in mind that ancient Hindus did not regard the poet as a *mystique manqué*, that is, as a man of religion strayed from the path of truth. On the contrary, in Sanskrit the word *kavi* (which later meant a poet in the usual acceptation) was applied originally to the seers who got revelations of truth, and could communicate what they had received to others in suitable language. The Vedic hymns were regarded as such revelations. The Hindus always remembered the religious affiliation of poetry, and described the pleasure derived from secular poetry as something like religious exultation, or as they put it: joy from poetry is the brother of the joy from the perception of the Brahman.

What the Way of Knowledge evoked by way of emotion or exultation was only a higher form of the religious excitement displayed by the priest-magicians of primitive peoples. As a matter of fact, all religious emotion is partly physiological, and what is known as mysticism certainly most so. Nobody can deny that religiosity is dependent on the physiological make-up of men, and that it is not within the physical potentialities of all men to be religious. Being religious according to the Way of Knowledge could not be an exception to this general rule.

The followers of the Way of Knowledge could feel that they had conquered death by discovering a form of the cosmos which was imperishable and everlasting, and derive joy not only from that conviction but also from the establishment of an intermittent feeling of oneness with it. But we know nothing of the manner in which the Way of Knowledge in its original form was practised by those who preached and followed it.

THERE IS NO HISTORICAL EVIDENCE besides the *Upanishads* themselves to show when or how the ideas embodied in them formed part of Hindu religious life. Even those passages in them which give expression to mystical exultation are embedded in contexts of philosophical and ritualistic arguments. Neither in the *Upanishads* nor in other Sanskrit texts is there any description of the religious or devotional life of those who followed the Way of Knowledge. The epics, for instance, often describe the daily life of the sages, and also reproduce their discussions. But these are always shown to be concerned with moral questions or mythology. All this suggests that the proper content of the Way of Knowledge passed out of religious life very soon after it came into existence. But in so far as it provided a psycho-physiological experience it survived, because on the one hand it could be planted on the practice of the well-known later cults, and on the other could be induced by auto-suggestion and special physical exercises. The desire to continue the experience by means of these is intelligible: the experience was too pleasurable to make those who had once had it reconciled to its loss when the capacity for having it naturally was lost. In order to continue the experience even a faked form of it was sought by the taking of drugs, cannabis more especially.

The Way of Knowledge survived in Hindu religious life in its modal part, and in this form it continued to be followed till recent times. Its prestige was such that it is still followed, but unfortunately it is also exploited by men who are nothing but charlatans.

IN ITS RESPECTABLE FORM, it was followed by men who left the world and lived their life of renunciation as individuals instead of becoming members of the ascetic orders. As a rule, they were not votaries

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of any of the major cults, but professed to seek knowledge about the ultimate meaning of existence, and remain in a state of joyousness through that knowledge. These men usually assumed or were given honorific titles like *Swami* (the most common one), *Maharshi, Param Hamsa, Mahatma*, etc., and lived as recluses, very often in inaccessible places in the hills and mountains. They devoted themselves to contemplation and meditation, and often went into trances or *samadhi*. They claimed to have arrived at true knowledge or ultimate wisdom, and to have found answers to the enigmas of human existence.

But no one has yet been able to find out what their knowledge or enlightenment amounted to, sofar as these were spiritual. Normally, they maintained almost complete taciturnity, at times giving the reason that what they knew could not be divulged to unworthy persons. If, however, they became vocal at all, their religious ideas could be recognised only as variations on the themes of the *Upanishads* and similar ancient mystical treatises. It is this reticence of theirs which has created the notion that the deepest Hindu religious message is esoteric.

But when they are social—and they cannot avoid being so altogether because men come to them to receive instruction—they can become loquacious. However, their teaching then is seen to be wholly didactic, and that too in a very commonplace form. Their teaching or preaching consists wholly of the moral ideas which have been current among mankind ever since it became civilised. They are often even trite.

NONE THE LESS, THE VALUE of this moral teaching is not to be underrated. The erosion of moral sensibility is continuous in human societies and it is most so in respect of those simple principles which sustain social life and which seem to be obvious. Therefore these simple principles have to be propagated ceaselessly. This can be compared to modern advertisements urging drinking milk, eating oranges, or using soap. What the cessation of elementary moral teaching can mean is clearly seen in the present-day world. Therefore didactism, even when it is as cloying as advertisements of everyday necessities, is not to be deprecated.

But the practitioners of the Way of Knowledge in Hindu society in recent times could never have exercised so decisive a moral influence if they had not been regarded as men who possessed supernatural powers. All the ascetics and hermits who remained in this Way were credited with such powers, and often they themselves condescended to adopt the tricks of their trade in order to be supported by society, when for themselves they only sought religious experiment. Through its supernatural aspect or colouration, the Way of Knowledge disclosed its links with the spirituality of the Way of Works.

I HAVE DISTINGUISHED the spirituality (or rather religiosity) of the Way of Action or Works from that of the Way of Knowledge by characterising one as introvert and the other as extrovert. The distinction is justified. If the religious life led in the Way of Knowledge is also partly a quest for power, it is so in a passive manner and that power is sought for the inner life of the devotee. That is to say, it gives the devotee the capacity to rise above the termination of selfhood, and the destruction of all things outside the self. In contrast, the spirituality of the Way of Action (*Karma Marga*) is oriented towards action in the form of unobstructed self-assertion. Its object is to acquire the capacity to do things beyond the natural physical and mental powers of man—e.g. to see into the future, read the minds of other men, control physiological processes, even disregard the laws of gravitation, in short, the capacity to perform miracles.

Spirituality of the Way of Action can therefore be regarded as a specialised and highly intensified form of the general religious practices of the Hindus. While the object of the latter was to ensure security and prosperity in the world to the extent they were attainable by natural means, or at best to obtain these in such a measure as could be expected only from luck or special favours of the deities, the spirituality of the Way of Action sought supernatural powers, to be used or not used as the possessor chose. The main satisfaction was the pride of possession.

Yet there was one extraordinary paradox in the methods of this form of spirituality. Although its obvious descent was from primitive magic, and its object the working of miracles, the methods adopted by it to obtain supernatural powers were wholly human. Except that in some forms of this spiritual pursuit incantations were employed, generally speaking it was held that miraculous powers or gains beyond the reach of human effort could be obtained by special physical and mental exercises, one of which was asceticism and self-mortification. Hindu renunciation, asceticism, and self-mortification were wholly different from what these were in Christianity.

FROM THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW, the renunciation and asceticism of the Way of Action might be regarded as a pampering of the very urges which these were meant to repress, namely to satisfy all the desires which are generated by the flesh. The whole of Hindu Religious and secular literature leaves no room for doubt as to the motives of Hindu renunciation and asceticism. They are

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courses of action which can be described in the formula *reculer pour mieux sauter*. These constitute the method of obtaining more and ever more power over men and nature by showing for some time how little one cared for the prizes and enjoyments offered by the world.

There are many legendary tales in Sanskrit which relate how certain sages performed such feats of self-mortification that Indra, Lord of Heaven, became alarmed. He thought these men would attain such power that they would be able to usurp his heaven. So he sent his courtesans to tempt them, and they invariably brought about the fall of the sages, none of whom came through the trials like St Anthony or Buddha. Sanskrit literature also has stories of defeated kings who practised the same type of self-mortification to recover their kingdoms. The story of Uma's penance to gain Siva as husband also reveals the same orientation of asceticism.

Even in historic times asceticism of this kind has been associated with the acquisition of occult powers of all kinds, including the power of overriding the laws of nature, controlling physiological processes, curing diseases, or foretelling the future. It has never been believed that these powers can be acquired by rational investigation and experimentation, and it has been assumed that they can come only from an esoteric discipline, of which severe self-mortification is a part. This kind of power had as its complement, or rather fulfilment, the power to dominate other men. Actually, an appearance of indifference to things that the world has to offer, even without occult powers, has by itself created a moral authority for those who have not shown it. As a means of acquiring and exerting power, renunciation has always been so effective among the Hindus that Mahatma Gandhi felt compelled to bring it into politics in order to obtain mass support for the nationalist movement.

THIS PARTICULAR KIND of religious practice, with its mingling of religious gymnastics and renunciation, has had such a hold on the Hindus, and its observances have been so conspicuous in all their activities, that outsiders have been led by the spectacle to attribute a deep, comprehensive, and esoteric religiosity to them. And this religiosity has been mistakenly associated with the Western conception of spirituality.

There was also another form of renunciation of worldly life among the Hindus, and that was seen in the Way of Knowledge. However, strictly speaking, that was not renunciation, far less asceticism. It was only living a life of self-restraint away from the distractions of the world. This retired life is extensively described in the epics and other books. These descriptions show that the sages lived normal lives in their families, and did not have to give up even sexual relations. This type of retired life was meant only to help concentration of mind in seeking knowledge.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN the two kinds of renunciation and their respective purposes is very strikingly illustrated by the story of the enlightenment of Buddha.

At one stage of his quest for knowledge he practised severe self-mortification for six years and was reduced by it to a skeleton. In the end he realised that all this was futile. So afterwards he led a quiet life of normal regimen and arrived at enlightenment. But in no form of Hindu renunciation is there any trace of the religio-moral idea that man's nature is innately sinful and that it must be repressed by severe and painful methods.

That human beings can gain occult powers by means of magic is, of course, an idea current in all primitive societies. But the Way of Action sought them through human effort, special psychological and physical exercises, and above all by means of self-mortification. So far as the exercises were concerned, the Hindu ascetics could demonstrate that these gave a control over bodily states or processes which went beyond the natural, and therefore this part of their method was empiric. But how did they entertain the idea that self-mortification could secure occult powers for them, whose validity could never be demonstrated? This appears to have been assumed *a priori*.

But a matter-of-fact explanation for this, too, may be suggested. In Hindu social and family life, refusal to take food or go out and expose oneself to cold or heat is a recognised method of psychological coercion designed to make relatives, neighbours, creditors, or even debtors, yield to one's wishes or demands. Generally, it succeeded.

Bishop Heber, who visited Benares in 1824, left in his journal an account of the application of this method of coercion against the British administration by the people of that city:

> "Government had then, unadvisedly, imposed a house-tax of a very unpopular character, both from its amount and its novelty. To this the natives objected, that they recognised in their British rulers the same rights which had been exercised by the Moguls,—that the land-tax was theirs, and that they could impose duties on commodities going to market, or for exportation: but that their houses were on their own,—that they had never been intermeddled with in any but their landed property, and commodities used in traffic,—and that the same power which now imposed a heavy and unheard of tax on their dwellings, might do the same next year on their children and themselves. These considerations, though backed by strong representations from the magistrates, produced no effect in Calcutta;

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on which the whole population of Benares and its neighbourhood determined to sit *'dhurna'* till their grievances were redressed. To sit *'dhurna'* or mourning, is to remain motionless in that posture, without food, and exposed to the weather, till the person against whom it is employed consents to the request offered; and the Hindoos believe, that whoever dies under such a process becomes a tormenting spirit to haunt and afflict his inflexible antagonist. This is a practice not unfrequent in the intercourse of individuals, to enforce payments of a debt, or forgiveness of one. And among Hindus it is very prevailing, not only from the apprehended dreadful consequences of the death of the petitioner, but because many are of opinion, that while a person sits *dhurna* at their door, they must not themselves presume to eat, or undertake any secular business. It is even said that some persons hire Brahmins to sit *dhurna* for them, the thing being to be done by proxy, and the *dhurna* of a Brahmin being naturally more aweful in its effects than that of a Soodra could be. . . ."

According to this custom, notices were sent out to the people of the city and surrounding villages to come and join such a demonstration.

"Above 300,000 persons, as it is said, deserted their houses, shut up their shops, suspended the labour of their farms, forebore to light fires, dress victuals, many of them even to eat, and sate down with folded arms and drooping heads, like so many sheep, on the plain which surrounds Benares. The local Government were exceedingly perplexed. There was the chance that very many of these strange beings would really perish, either from their obstinacy, or the diseases which they would contract in their present situation. There was a probability that famine would ensue from the interruption of agricultural labours at the most critical time of the year. There was a certainty that the revenue would suffer very materially from total cessation of all traffick. And it might even be apprehended that their despair, and the excitement occasioned by such a display of physical force would lead them to far stronger demonstrations of discontent than that of sitting *dhurna*. On the other hand, the authorities of Benares neither were permitted, nor would it have been expedient, to yield to such a demand, so urged. They conducted themselves with great prudence and good temper. Many of the natives appeared to expect, and the Brahmins perhaps hoped, that they would still further outrage the feelings of the people, by violently suppressing their assemblage. They did no such thing, but coolly reasoned with some of the ringleaders on the impossibility that Government should yield. . . ."

At last, the demonstrators got tired and dispersed. But the authorities in Calcutta abolished the tax afterwards. This was the real historical precedent of Mahatma Gandhi's application of Hindu spirituality to the Indian nationalist movement in order to secure India's political independence. Naturally, Occidentals—put on a wrong track by his professed admiration for the Bible and Tolstoy—never understood what his method really was. It would seem that the practice of extreme self-mortification to obtain supernatural power was an extension of the social method to religious life.

Whether the men who followed this path of Hindu spirituality actually exercised supernatural powers cannot be asserted as a certainty. But the Hindus believed that they did, and even today people tell stories of supernatural deeds with a perfect conviction of their being true. As to the practitioners, whether they actually possessed any such powers or not, they exhibited extreme confidence and through this confidence could always exert their power on other men. Thus the reputation for possessing spiritual power actually gained through the methods of the Way of Action conferred a power which was a variant of political power. Thus this type of spirituality never disassociated itself from the world, nor failed to gain worldly advantages.

THE FINAL RESULT was that Hindu spirituality, arising in both its forms from the cosmos, lost itself in the material cosmos. Of these, the brand of spirituality found in the Way of Action could never have avoided its worldly destiny. But the spirituality of the Way of Knowledge perhaps could. It had arrived at a notion of the universe which was a possible alternative to the subjective transcendental world created by all religions, including Hinduism itself in its less abstruse form. That world, intangible as it was to the senses, had real permanence.

Starting from this discovery—that is, the realisation that non-material existence could be as real as the material, a religion could have been created which would have been immune to the destructive impact which science has had on conventional religions. But the obstacle was that religion is sustained only by passion and never by intellectual concepts. The intuitive adumbration of the real nature of existence at first could arouse religious emotion through bodily responses. When that faculty was lost, the most basic religious discovery of the Hindus passed out of religion and was reduced to philosophy, which was incapable of supporting spiritual life.

So Hindu spiritual life became pursuit of power through religion. It is this infatuation with power which has nullified the greatest religious discovery of the Hindus.

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Sean O'Brien

Le Départ

You've been leaving for years, and now no one's surprised
When you knock to come in from the weather.
The crew is past embarrassment:
They can live with their nautical names, and with yours.
So sit, take down your glass and talk
Of all that is not you, that keeps you here
Among the sentimental stevedores
In drinking clubs in the dank afternoons
Of your twenty-ninth year. There may be news.

Indeed. Somebody drowned last night, walked sideways
Off a Polish fishmeal hulk; a rabid Paraguayan bear
Was seen among the kindly hookers eating fruit;
A hand-carved coelacanth was found
When the cells were dug out to lay drains. . . .

How can you not be struck by these arrivals?
The perfect boat is sailing Tuesday week.
It's headed southwards, way beyond the ice—
Starsailing seems quite plausible by night.
Until then there is querulous Ninepin
(The loss of his ticket for thieving)
And Madeleine's never-secret grief
(Be tolerant, and ask politely what)
And someone selling crocodiles
And hash from the sump of a jungle. . . .
Now even the Juvaro have numbered accounts—
Sell them your service Forty Five
And get a tape-recorder back.
The Amazon's an answering service:
No one's ever really lost. A month ago
Rocheteau, stuck for credit, offered up
The pelvic bones of Mungo Park
In exchange for a fifth of Jim Beam . . .
We always thought that Scot was lying about Africa. . . .

It is easily night: soft boom of lighter-boats
Beyond the fogwall, swung on inauthentic tides
That left you here, that left you here

As the love songs go over the warehouse
Among patrolling cats and a lost A.R.P.
With his bucket of sand and his halberd

You are doped on the stairs on the way to the moon
With Yvonne, who has aged but not quite,
Who knows the words of every song
And places one flattering palm on your spine

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Till you move, who keeps a special bottle
For you (but half gone, half gone) by the bed,
A black fire of sugar that says all there is
About travelling. You're halfway there.
And all shall sing until the awful morning
Reminds them of themselves,
Then sleep in early restaurants,
Boastful of such daft endurance,
Then inspect the shipping lists
Until the time is right.

"You talk in your sleep", says Yvonne,
"So I woke you. All this travelling—
You leave the girls for what?
Are we not always, always travelling?
Let's drink to that, and one before you go."

Stanislaw Baranczak

Please Complete Legibly in Block Capitals

Born? /yes, no; delete if not
applicable/; why "yes"? /give reasons/; where,
when, why, for whom do you live? whom do you contact
with the surface of your brain, who matches
your pulse-beat? any relatives outside
the frontiers of your skin? /yes, no/; why
"no"? /give reasons/; will you be in touch
with the stream of the epoch's blood? /yes, no/; do you
write letters to yourself? /yes, no/; do you make use
of the telephone of confidence? /yes,
no/; do you feed your suspicion
if so on what? whence
do you draw the means of support in the bounds
of disobedience? do you
own a fortune
of permanent fear? Knowledge of foreign
bodies and tongues? orders, decorations?
special marks? the state of your civil courage?
do you intend to have children? /yes, no/; why
"no"?

Translated by Adam Czerniawski

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AMONG the variety of paranoiac symptoms displayed by the late Reverend Jim Jones, of the People's Temple (San Francisco) and Jonestown (Guyana) was an obsessive fear that history would deny him his rightful place as the living embodiment of, among others, Jesus Christ, the Buddha, and Lenin. One cannot help thinking that Mr Jones's fear was justified, even though, by the manner of his death and the mass suicide of his followers, Mr Jones did his best to force himself on history's attention.

History indeed is not likely to remember Mr Jones for long, just as it has long ago forgotten thousands of false prophets who at sundry times and various places have captured a momentary attention before disappearing into oblivion. It is not by the immediate impact of their personalities, their words or their deeds, but by the permanent and world-wide diffusion of their influence that religious and spiritual leaders have established their claims to greatness, and by such standards one would judge Mr Jones and his People's Temple to have been non-starters. Not even the hideous and macabre version of the Last Supper enacted at Jonestown is likely to guarantee Mr Jones the immortality for which he craved. Indeed, it could be said that in this century we have already supped too full of far greater horrors for Mr Jones's grotesque apotheosis to claim more than a momentary claim to attention.

Yet if, as he feared, Mr Jones is doomed to be forgotten, he might perhaps, if he had lived, have found some consolation in the immense and world-wide publicity inspired by the events which ended the lives of himself and his wretched, bemused, pathetic followers. It is not on history but on the media that Mr Jones has left his mark, and as everyone knows such footprints in the sands of time are quickly obliterated by the next incoming tide of sensationalism. Yet if the media have short memories, they perhaps more than make up for it by the sheer scale and intensity of the efforts which they devote to the sensation of the day, and in this respect at least Mr Jones could not have complained that he had been neglected.

WITHIN BARELY A FORTNIGHT of his death, two paperback accounts of the November events at Jonestown, and those that had preceded them, were already available on the bookstalls; this must surely constitute a record in instant publishing. Both books[1] are eye-witness accounts and both were dictated from hospital beds as their authors recovered from gunshot wounds received during the attack in which Congressman Leo Ryan was murdered on the airstrip at Port Kaituma. Of the two, Mr Krause's is perhaps the better, but of both it can be said that, given the circumstances under which they were composed and the almost incredible story they have to tell, they are examples of American on-the-spot journalism at its best.

In addition, of course, there has been the immense news coverage, including exhaustive cover-stories in both *Time* and *Newsweek*, devoted to Jones and Jonestown; while the *Washington Post*'s paperback has immediately been bought by CBS as the basis for a television documentary. But mere facts and reportage are not enough. Times Books have commissioned James Reston Jnr to write a "documentary novel" on Jonestown and the People's Temple, though in such a case one finds it hard to imagine what fiction can add to reality, unless Mr Reston's imagination is quite abnormally fertile and active. A New York magazine writer has been commissioned to write an "in-depth" study of Mr Jones and his cult, and a full-length biography is promised us in hardback. Television companies have been inundated with scripts for plays, while the reminiscences of ex-members of the People's Temple find an eager and active market. If Mr Jones's obsessive fears of being forgotten in the march of history prove to be justified, it will not be for want of trying by the media; and if it was publicity, not immortality, that he wanted, he may perhaps at last rest easy in his grave.

IT WOULD of course be unreasonable to be surprised by such almost ghoulish interest in the events at Jonestown. They were, to say the very least, unusual, and the practices of the cult of which Mr Jones was the high priest, and his own personality and conduct, his fears, obsessions, compulsions, egomania and delusions, were of a kind to stimulate even the most jaded appetitite for sensation, though some of the details involved are calculated to upset a queasy stomach.

Besides, the Jonestown story had, as they say, everything. There was sex, of a highly perverted

[1] *Guyana Massacre: The Eye-witness Account.* By CHARLES A. KRAUSE. With exclusive material by Laurence M. Stern, Richard Harwood, and the staff of *The Washington Post*. Photographs and commentary by Frank Johnston. Berkley Books, $2.50; Pan Books, £1.20. *The Suicide Cult.* By MARSHALL KILDUFF and RON JAVERS. Staff Correspondents of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Bantam Books, $2.50, £1.25.

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kind, in the apparently unbridled license which Mr Jones allowed to his own lusts, while imposing sexual abstinence on his disciples. There were both financial and political intrigue and corruption, as displayed by the treasure which Mr Jones laid up on earth, rather than in heaven, by the bribes he judiciously distributed to the press in California, by his power of delivering the votes of his followers to those politicians who took his fancy (like the recently murdered Mayor Moscone of San Francisco), or by his dealings with the Prime Minister of Guyana, Mr Forbes Burnham. And there were also violence and cruelty, as shown in the beatings, the forcible incarceration, the crude forms of torture, practised by Mr Jones on his flock, which in the end turned the jungle paradise of Guyana into a kind of concentration camp, of which Mr Jones was both the supreme administrator and legislator, and also the financial beneficiary. And finally there was the unrestrained egoism of a Leader, who recognised no limits to the demands he made on others, or any ethical restraints which might conflict with the compulsions arising out of his own psychoses.

Sex, money, corruption, violence, the charismatic image of the Leader—what better material could one find more directly calculated to appeal to modern tastes, both sophisticated and primitive? But to this repulsive amalgam Mr Jones, like some alchemist who has really discovered the philosopher's stone, added certain elements which made them, to his followers, irresistible. For all the rituals and ceremonies of his cult were consecrated by the blessing and the means of grace provided by a primitive and revivalist form of religion and the divine promise of both heavenly and earthly beatitude. Indeed, they were practised in the name of virtues which have more than merely divine authority today: the virtues of compassion and justice, of social and racial egalitarianism, of sympathy for the poor, the needy and the oppressed. Jones indeed seems to have had an uncanny and unholy genius for exploiting equally both the worst and the best instincts of mankind in such a way that they confirmed and complemented each other. It is perhaps typical of his gift for combining the most disparate elements so that each reinforced the other that, while the great majority of his flock consisted of ignorant and poverty-stricken blacks or poor whites, its leadership, or priesthood as it were, was supplied by prosperous and well educated members of the white middle class. And yet both sections of this society were equally fanatical, and degraded, in their complete subjection to the will of Jones the Father, the God who was Dad. In his capacity for embracing contradictions, Jones sometimes reminds one of Shatov, in Dostoevsky's novel *The Devils:* "Starting from the premise of absolute freedom, I arrive at the conclusion of absolute tyranny." The boy from Indiana who set out to found a new religion in California even managed to infuse an air of pioneering adventure into his weird colonial enterprise in Guyana, as if he were opening up new and unexplored territories of the American psyche; and yet we know almost certainly that the real motive for moving to Guyana was fear and panic at the thought of exposure and persecution as a result of the ugly rumours, and newspaper reports and investigations, inspired by the activities of the People's Temple in San Francisco.

THE FACT THAT Jones projected his almost mesmeric powers over his followers through the medium of religion has proved something of a difficulty to the media in their coverage of the Guyana massacre. Sex, violence, cruelty, political and financial intrigue we are accustomed to as driving forces in the world we see around us. But that religion should be a force powerful enough to drive nearly a thousand people to mass suicide requires, it is felt, something more than a merely factual record of what happened. Thus hard on the heels of reportage and description have followed explanation and interpretation. So gruesome an event, it is felt, cannot be made acceptable, or even credible, to contemporary minds without some attempt to relate it to the ordinary context of the way we live now. The results have in some cases been disconcerting.

Thus *The Economist,* for instance, heads an article on events in Jonestown (25 November 1978) with the bold question: "IS SATAN DEAD?" *The Economist* has a long and distinguished history of devotion to scientific rationalism, and within such a tradition such a question can only be regarded as purely rhetorical, to be dismissed as either meaningless or unworthy of an answer, for Satan surely belongs to that realm of superstition for which the columns of *The Economist* have normally no place or its readers any patience. On this occasion, however, *The Economist* not merely takes the question seriously but goes so far as to suggest that even to ask it may be the beginning of a new wisdom, in the form of "the search for new forms of spiritual experience, for a new release from an existence walled in by birth and death." Such a search may, no doubt, as in Jonestown, take a wrong turning; nevertheless, *The Economist* suggests, it may be the start of a "learning process" which in the end may conduce to good. "For if Satan, in some sense, is not dead, that implies that God is not either."

I MUST CONFESS that I find both the logic and the theology of *The Economist's* conclusion highly dubious, and in any case Jonestown seems a rather expensive way of arriving at it. But perhaps that is irrelevant. What is genuinely interesting, and sur-

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prising, is that a journal in the scientific humanist tradition of *The Economist* should extend a positive welcome to a search "for new forms of spiritual experience, for a new release from an existence walled in by birth and death", even if it should, on occasion, lead to the horrors of a Jonestown. From this point of view, such horrors may be regarded, or dismissed, as one of the unavoidable hazards of any search governed by "scientific principles"; that is to say, the normal processes of experiment, trial-and-error by which any objectively verifiable truth is achieved, and Mr Jones himself as merely yet another experimentalist who has made a slip under the microscope. It may not be unreasonable to object that here *The Economist* has made a fundamental confusion between the kind of spiritual adventure in which Mr Jones's followers were engaged and any search which is genuinely governed by "scientific principles."

The Economist has not been alone in trying to solve and explain the many puzzles, conundrums, paradoxes presented by Mr Jones and his flock. Indeed, in the USA psychoanalysts, social scientists, spiritual leaders, professional students of esoteric sects and cults have been working overtime to satisfy the demands by the media for an understanding of an experience which they feel to lie outside their experience and competence. No doubt the "in-depth" study of Jonestown which we are promised will depend heavily upon such sources. Some ascribe the absolute power exercised by Jones over his disciples, and the ways in which he exercised it, to the decline of the Family, the decay of Established Religion, a deep-seated and widespread longing for Leadership, the sense of deprivation and isolation experienced by entire communities, especially the Blacks, in a modern technological society, and the joyful welcome extended to anyone who, like Mr Jones, promised to lead them, so long as they subjected themselves to his will, into a Promised Land, whether located in California, the jungles of Guyana, or eventually perhaps even in the Soviet Union. For some, the colony in Guyana satisfied a deep-felt need precisely because it constituted a form of "extended family", with Jones as God the Father, or "Dad", who had every right to demand the most extreme sacrifices, and inflict the most brutal punishments, because of the warmth and intimacy of the spiritual communion he offered.

FOR Georgie Ann Geyer, however, in the *International Herald Tribune*, Jonestown and the People's Temple were simply a particular case of the familiar phenomenon of brain-washing and mind-control, which in its multifarious forms is universal throughout our present society, and as such conceals no mysteries. It is, she says, *totally* explainable, if only we will take the trouble to find out.

> "We should use the energies from our sense of shock to begin really serious research on cults, cultism, brainwashing and what our national society can do to form personalities strong enough to resist them. At this time, there is very, very little research on all of this.
>
> We should study one of the 'no-no' subjects in the bin, which is how our systems of local and national politics support, cater to, and (often for illegal and corrupt ends) work with the mad Jim Joneses."

Thus for Miss Geyer it is society, not Satan, which is responsible for Jonestown, and the only remedy is to be found in patient study of, and research into, the social mechanisms by which such evils come about.

ONE CAN ADMIRE Miss Geyer's absolute confidence that by such methods Jonestown can be rendered *"totally* explainable", without at the same time sharing it. For is it not precisely the failure of the rational attitudes on which such confidence rests to satisfy the immense expectations and hopes which they have inspired in the wretched of the earth which is largely responsible for making them responsive to the false paradoxes proffered and promised them by such as Mr Jones? It may indeed be that there are problems, experiences, needs, sufferings which are not in fact wholly explicable by the methods in which Georgie Ann Geyer places so much trust. Perhaps for that very reason it may be probable, if depressing, that in a variety of shapes and forms Jonestowns will continue to flourish, if not in the jungles of Guyana, in the stone jungles of the cities in which most people are condemned to live today.

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The Psycho-Historians

A Psychiatrist's Scepticism—By MICHAEL SHEPHERD

"You need to know the time, the place, the milieu, the substructure and the superstructure, the state of and the determinants of consciousness, and the human capacity of consciousness to expand and explode. . . ."

MALCOLM BRADBURY, *The History Man*

THE TERM "psycho-history" has been loosely employed by several writers in recent years. Its impact on historians as a group, however, can be conveniently pinpointed to the presidential address delivered in New York to the American Historical Association on 29 December 1957. The lecturer was Professor William L. Langer, whose distinguished academic career had been associated with historical research of the traditional variety and the title of whose lecture, "The Next Assignment", had not prepared his audience for the startling prediction that

> . . ."the newest history" will be more intensive and probably less extensive. I refer more specifically to the urgently needed deepening of our historical understanding through exploitation of the concepts and findings of modern psychology. And by this, may I add, I do not refer to classical or academic psychology which, so far as I can detect, has little bearing on historical problems, but rather to psychoanalysis and its later developments and variations as included in the terms "dynamic" or "depth psychology."

And he went on;

> The historian is, of course, less interested in the individual as such than in the impact of certain individuals upon the society of their time and, beyond that, in the behaviour of men as members of the group, society, or culture.

Though he referred to the events associated with the Black Death as potentially illustrative of his thesis, Langer's unexpected conclusion did not appear to have resulted from any work of his own. Indeed, in the course of his address he acknowledged a major debt to his younger brother, Dr Walter C. Langer, a practising psychoanalyst who had written a secret war-time report on Adolf Hitler for the US Office of Strategic Services which anticipates much of what was to be presented as "psycho-historical" research. Dr Langer's study was not to be published for some years, but a few months after his brother's address the publication of Erik Erikson's influential book, *Young Man Luther,* served to stimulate interest among American psychiatrists not only in individuals who had made history but also in those who were making or were potentially capable of making history. The psycho-historical bandwagon had begun to roll.[1]

In the election year of 1964 most members of the American Psychiatric Association were presented with a postal invitation to answer a single question:

> *"Do you believe that Barry Goldwater is psychologically fit to be President of the United States?"*

This event, while precipitating a storm of protest from the American Psychiatric Association, also focused attention on the possible contributions of psychiatry to contemporary issues. In 1967 the Freud-Bullitt study of Woodrow Wilson, originally prepared in 1919, was at last released for publication; and in the same year the Director of the Institute for the Study of National Behavior at Princeton University published a paper in *Science* on "Psychiatry and International Affairs" calling

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[1] William L. Langer, "The Next Assignment", *The American Historical Review* (LXIII, no. 2, 1958), pp. 283–304. Walter C. Langer, *The Mind of Adolf Hitler* (1973). Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (1958).

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for the training of psychiatrists as consultants in the sphere of international relations so as to utilise their supposed expertise.[2] Two years later Erikson produced his study of Gandhi, to be followed by a torrent of books and articles on living figures with such titles as "The Kennedy Neurosis", "President Nixon's Psychiatric Profile", "Nixon Agonistes", "Revolutionary Immortality: Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Cultural Revolution" and "Stalin as Revolutionary: a study in history and personality."[3]

THIS INTENSIVE ACTIVITY was accompanied by a flood of more academic writings. In 1972 the American Historical Association accepted as members 400 individuals belonging to a "Group for the Use of Psychology in History." One year later there was founded a *Journal of Psycho-history* (which, significantly, soon changed its title to *History of Childhood Quarterly*). The moving spirit behind this journal and the most vociferous advocate of "psycho-history" is Lloyd de Mause, who attempted to define its scope as follows:

> . . . history cannot be science in any strict sense of the term and history can never regard it as part of its task to establish laws. Written history may in the course of its narrative, use some of the laws established by the various sciences, but its own task remains that of relating the essential sequence of historical action and, *qua* history, to tell what happened not why.
>
> Psycho-history . . . is on the contrary specifically concerned with establishing laws and discovering causes. The relationship between history and psycho-history is parallel to the relationship between astrology and astronomy, or if that seems too pejorative between geology and physics. . . . Psycho-history [is] the science of historical motivation.[4]

For de Mause "psycho-history" is a wholly new discipline, "less a division of history or psychology than a replacement for sociology, based on a set of problems, a conscious methodology and criteria of excellent all its own."[5] The contents of a typical issue of the *Journal of Psycho-history* illustrate the products of this ambitious claim (*History of Childhood Quarterly*, 1975). The self-explanatory titles of the articles are: (1) Kissinger: a Psychohistory; (2) Pedagogy as Intrusion: Teaching Values in Popular Primary Schools in Nineteenth-Century America; (3) Infanticide in the Province of Canterbury during the Fifteenth Century; (4) Autobiography as a Key to Identity in the Progressive Era; (5) Psycho-history and Psychotherapy; (6) Psychological Analysis and Presidential Personality: the case of Richard Nixon.

IT IS NATURAL TO CULL such illustrations from American sources because the psycho-historical drum has been beaten most loudly in the USA. The reverberations have, of course, been felt elsewhere, but the rhythm is essentially the same. Here is an example by one of our own amateur psycho-historians, a prominent British politician overheard brooding on the role of the mother of parliaments and her children:

> . . . our rules are drafted to seek to contain our perversions. The drive of our lust for dominance and power which has brought most of us to our places must be checked if the institution is to survive. The impress of the anal phase, the stage of infantile libidinal development when, accompanied by aggressive fantasies, the child is fascinated by the mastery of his body through sphincter control, is too deeply printed upon our characters. Although most members would fiercely resist any interpretations which hint at the origins of the nomenclature of our institutions and proceedings, the blunt fact is that we take our seats every day in a chamber where we are continuously passing motions.[6]

PSYCHO-HISTORY, as might be expected, has evoked strong reactions from both the psychiatrists and the historians.

The objections raised by the former group have grown since the sharp decline in the reputation of psychoanalysis within the USA during the past decade. Their criticisms have become more strident, and nowhere more strikingly so than in the reception accorded to the Freud-Bullitt book on Woodrow Wilson. Though Freud himself has often been excepted from criticism for even his wildest speculations, this work was singled out for adverse comment and, in the words of a recent American Psychiatric Association report, "widely condemned, both by psychiatrists and historians, for its obvious bias, its psychological reductionism, and its failure to give weight to historical and social

[2] Sigmund Freud and William C. Bullitt, "Woodrow Wilson", ENCOUNTER, January and February 1967; *Thomas Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study* (1967). B. Wedge, "Psychiatry and International Affairs", *Science*, vol. 157, no. 3786 (1967), pp. 281–285.

[3] N. G. Clinch, *The Kennedy Neurosis* (New York, 1973); E. Chesen, *President Nixon's Psychiatric Profile* (New York, 1973); G. Wills, *Nixon Agonistes* (Boston, 1969); Robert Jay Lifton, *Revolutionary Immortality: Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (New York, 1968); R. C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879–1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York, 1973).

[4] Lloyd de Mause, "The Independence of Psychohistory", *Journal of Psycho-history*, (3, no. 2, 1975), pp. 163–183.

[5] Lloyd de Mause (ed.), *A Bibliography of Psychohistory* (1975), p. viii.

[6] Leo Abse, M.P., *Private Member* (1974).

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factors which had a bearing on the subject."[7] This report carries some weight, emanating as it does from an official "Task Force on Psycho-history" convened by the Association and charged with the task of considering the ethics and scholarship involved in the field. It goes on to identify the crucial issue as follows:

> A thornier, more complex, and, in some respects, more disquieting problem has arisen in connection with the recent spate of publications purporting to apply the principles and theoretical constructs of dynamic psychiatry (principally psychoanalytic) to the study of living or very recently deceased persons of wide and usually political significance. A similar problem has arisen with respect to studies of currently existing, politically significant groups.

Tactfully written as it is, the report roundly condemns many of the objectives of psycho-history and its practitioners.

The historians, as is their wont, have been less discreet. They have taken up the challenge with some vigour and, for the most part, with some disdain. Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper, for example, was scarcely able to contain himself in his assessment of Dr Walter Langer's book on Hitler, a topic on which he is an acknowledged authority, and he took the opportunity to deliver a memorable broadside.

> . . . Psycho-history does not only rest on a defective philosophy, it is also vitiated by a defective method. Instead of proceeding from demonstrable steps, from fact to interpretation, from evidence to conclusion, psycho-historians move in the opposite direction. They deduce their facts from their theories; and this means, in effect, that facts are at the mercy of theory, selected and valued according to the consistence with theory, even invented for the sake of theory. The defect springs, I suggest, from the very nature of psychoanalysis. For psychoanalysis, at best, is a means of therapy, not of investigation. Even if it should cure, it is not thereby shown to be true. It is not a means of establishing fact but a therapeutic myth.[8]

By way of illustration Trevor-Roper singles out the following passage, in which Langer describes how, after completing his work, he visited a female colleague who asked him what he had been able to find out about Hitler's childhood:

> "Without attempting to be orderly I related the material as it came to my mind but omitted any appraisal of its possible significance. She listened intently for a while and then interrupted me saying, 'Now I know what his perversion is!' And", exclaims the doctor, "to my utter amazement, she was right!" i.e. she agreed with him.

Trevor-Roper notes that, in this account,

> Dr Hall had not heard a single fact about Hitler's sexual life. Her "far-reaching insight" into his alleged perversion was not based on any empirical or verifiable evidence at all. It was intellectually deduced by the rules of psychoanalysis, from some casual statements about Hitler's childhood which Dr Langer had picked up from stale and random gossip repeated fifty years afterwards and thousands of miles away. And yet the agreement of two psycho-analysts interpreting the same rules in the same way made it "right": they "knew."
>
> I treasure the record of that meeting: it so perfectly illustrates the parallel which I have suggested between psycho-analysts and witch-doctors. I can easily imagine two grave old demonologists chatting comfortably by a porcelain stove in 17th-century Württemberg or Bavaria and discussing, over a flagon of Bocksbeuttel, the case of a suspicious old lady in a remote village. On a few scraps of gossip, insignificant to the layman but full of meaning to the expert—the furtive comings and goings of a black cat, the wasting away of one of the parson's piglings, an alleged rustle in the chimney-stack—they both reach the same conclusion; and "by God!" exclaims one to the other, slapping his thigh and pouring out another gurgling Pokal, "you're right!"

THE MOST SEARCHING examination of psycho-history from the historian's standpoint has been made by Professor Jacques Barzun of Columbia University, who reaches a verdict of gross deficiency on the grounds of method and of scholarship.[9] Barzun pins down the essence of the historian's approach to the past, as distinct from that of the sociologist or the psychologist, by contrasting three related statements.

The sociological statement reads: "The net effect of his career was destruction, not creation." The psychological statement reads: "The mainspring of his character was conquest." The historical statement reads: "*Veni, vidi, vici.*"

The basic criteria of history, he reminds us, are narrative, chronology, concreteness (of ideas as well as events), and memorability. Like Trevor-Roper, Barzun does not deny the importance of

[7] American Psychiatric Association, *"The Psychiatrist as Psychohistorian" Task Force-Report II* (Washington, D.C., 1976).

[8] Hugh Trevor-Roper "Re-inventing Hitler", *Sunday Times* (18 February 1973), p. 35.

[9] Jacques Barzun, "History: The Muse and her Doctors", *The American Historical Review* (77, no. 1, 1972), pp. 36–64. See also his *Clio and the Doctors: Psycho-History, Quanto-History and History* (1976).

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psychology in the march of history; no one familiar with Herodotus, Plutarch, Clarendon, Gibbon or Renan could maintain so absurd a proposition. At the same time he contests the notion that any particular form of psychological theory could account for historical events in the manner claimed and he levels the following charges against "psycho-history" and its congeners:

> that they are not new disciplines; that they are not history; that their sense of evidence is weak; that they usurp the name of science as well as of psychology; that human typology and social analogy, even when exact, are not sufficient guides to action; that technical jargon does not add to understanding; that the most innovative psycho-historian needs good histories to help him conceive, define and direct his own work; that the theorists of the new genres should examine and concatenate their thoughts, rather than exhort and rally. . . .

Thus, "psycho-history" cannot be said to have lived up to its own pretensions. To its credit, however, may be attributed one major if unintended achievement: to have re-awakened interest in the broader links between psychiatry and history, an area of enquiry which has long lain dormant, apart from the flickering interest of individual scholars. This more constructive issue demands some consideration in its own right.

THE HISTORY OF PSYCHIATRY is bound up with the development of ideas about the definition, causation and treatment of recognised mental illnesses, along with the careers and contributions of those individuals who have contributed to our understanding of them. However, as Karl Jaspers pointed out more than 60 years ago, inasmuch as these disorders are embedded in a time-bound socio-cultural matrix the field of general psychopathology impinges inevitably on the substance of historical study. In Jaspers' own words:

> This knowledge of social grouping is always a necessity for the psychiatrist if he is to understand the patients he meets in the clinic. But, beyond that, psychopathology has an increasing interest in abnormal psychic phenomena which can be studied only rarely in the clinics or not at all. It enlarges its sources of experience therefore by seeking a knowledge of abnormal psychic events that occur outside the clinics in ordinary life among different social groups and are reflected in human history. This is the final field of investigation for psychopathology.[10]

In recent years some historians have shown themselves prepared to approach the area of common ground from their own standpoints. The tradition extends from Vico through Michelet to Herder and Dilthey, who were all in their different ways concerned with the notion of historical consciousness of man in the setting of his epoch. Ranke's traditional academic view was of history as the chronological narrative of events, particularly events concerned with war, politics and diplomacy. Conceived in these terms history became, in E. J. Hobsbawm's words, "a deliberately backward discipline." But it has slowly given ground to the proponents of economic and sociological history and, as A. D. Momigliano pointed out in his survey of historiography almost a hundred years after Ranke's death it has now been compelled to examine "the relation between the explanation of historical events and explanation of individual actions."

It was the French historian Lucien Febvre who first spoke explicitly of *histoire psychologique*, the study of what he called the histories of *mentalité* and of *sensibilité*, which have been defined as ". . . what was 'thinkable' in a human collective at a given moment of time." In his seminal study, on the religion of Rabelais, Febvre illustrated what he had in mind. Taking as his subject the mental structure of 16th-century France, Febvre concentrated on its intellectual content and the modes of its expression, pointing to the various notions then held of the sacred and profane and the part played in their sensibility by hearing and smell rather than visual perception. Febvre's approach has since been elaborated with great skill by Robert Mandrou in his *Introduction to Modern France* where, in a remarkable chapter entitled "The Mind: mental equipment and fundamental attitudes", he explains his guiding principle in these words:

> Just as we could not conceive of studying architecture or the art of weaving in some distant period without first describing the techniques available to the artisan of the time, so we must reconstruct the mental resources at the disposal of professional intellectuals or laymen for analysing, describing and explaining the world, men and God.

This he proceeds to do with much subtlety, paying particular regard to the use of spoken and written language, and contemporary notions of space, time, and the natural environment.[11]

[10] Karl Jaspers, *General Psychopathology* (1922: tr. Honig & Hamilton, 1963). E. J. Hobsbawm, "Karl Marx's Contribution to Historiography", in *Ideology in Social Science* (ed. Blackburn, 1975), pp. 265–284. A. Momingliano, *Studies in Historiography* (1969).

[11] Frank E. Manuel, "The Use and Abuse of Psychology in History", in "Historical Studies Today", *Daedalus* (1971), pp. 187–213. Lucien Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVI^e siècle: la religion de Rabelais* (1947). Robert Mandrou, *Introduction to Modern France, 1500–1640* (1975).

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THE SCOPE of *histoire psychologique*, however, stops well short of abnormal psychology, individual or social. Even so, as early as 1908, Graham Wallas's prescient study of *Human Nature in Politics* drew attention to the importance of what he called impulse and instinct in public affairs. But for his psychology Wallas turned to William James, Lloyd Morgan, and Stanley Hall, apparently subscribing to R. G. Collingwood's dictum that "irrational forces . . . the blind forces and activities in us are not parts of the historical process." An awareness of the importance of these forces for an understanding of historical events, however, was even then in the air. In 1912, in his study on *The Crowd*, Gustave Le Bon attacked the classical approach of contemporary historians to the French Revolution for their neglect of the irrational, claiming that their view "was simply the result of the habit of having recourse to rational interpretations to explain events dictated by influences . . . which were not rational." The notion of collective irrationality was developed with more precision by the historian Georges Lefebvre in *La Grande Peur* (1932), a study of the false rumour about the arrival of brigands which spread through France in 1789, related partly to the false information which was disseminated but also to collective anxiety about hunger, disorder, and vagabondage in troubled times. More recently Norman Cohn has written persuasively of the psychology of social movements like millenarianism and anti-Semitism, attempting to trace their links with shared paranoid fantasies.[12]

In so doing, of course, all these writers are merely re-examining a host of major social phenomena with psychiatric overtones, including magic, superstitious beliefs, miracles, witchcraft, possession, orgiastic cults and, above all, the epidemics of irrational behaviour which have intrigued so many earlier medical observers. Within this framework the psychiatrist, familiar as he is with the range of individual aberration and with what has been called "that particle of madness indispensable to man", may legitimately have a contribution to make. Indeed, in the study of collective psychopathology Rudolf Virchow, who regarded such epidemics as mass products of sociocultural maladjustment following periods of political and intellectual revolution, went so far as to conclude that:

> The history of epidemics is, therefore, the history of disturbances which civilization has experienced. Its changes show us with powerful force the turning points at which civilization moved off in a new direction. Every true cultural revolution is followed by epidemics. . . . Psychiatry alone enables the historian to survey and understand the major fluctuations of public opinion and popular feeling, which on the whole resemble the picture of individual mental illnesses."[13]

WHAT ABOUT these individual mentral illnesses? In an historical context the psychiatrist is much less likely to be confronted with characters who were demonstrably insane, e.g. George III or Ludwig II, than with the type of person whom Sir Harold Wilson, referring to a prominent contemporary African leader, pithily described as "a nutter", a term which is more decorously synonymous with particular forms of neurosis and/or personality disorder. Of these people Ernst Kretschmer once observed that psychiatrists often provide court-reports on them when times are peaceful but that they can become our rulers in epochs of turbulence. In clinical terms, therefore, we know much more about the unsuccessful than about the successful "nutter" who, if he or she succeeds in making an impact on historical events, is unlikely to come close to detached observation.

There are, however, some exceptions, one of the best having been provided by the man who was perhaps the most perceptive of all participant-observers in modern history, Alexis de Tocqueville. As Foreign Minister in the short-lived French cabinet formed in 1849 after the "events" of the previous year, he was uniquely placed to study one of the most successful "nutters" of the era, Louis Napoleon. Here is part of his penetrating description of that archetypal mountebank:

> he [Louis Napoleon] was vastly superior to what his preceding career and his mad enterprises might very properly have led one to believe of him. This was my first impression on conversing with him. In this respect he deceived his adversaries, and perhaps still more his friends, if this term can be applied to the politicians who patronised his candidature. The greater part of these, in fact, elected him, not because of his merits, but because of his presumed mediocrity. They expected to find him an instrument which they could handle as they pleased, and which it would always be lawful for them to break when they wished to. In this they were greatly deceived.

"As a private individual", Tocqueville wrote,

> Louis Napoleon possessed certain attractive qualities: an easy and kindly humour, a mind which was gentle, and even tender, without being delicate, great confidence in his intercourse, perfect simplicity, a certain personal modesty

[12] Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd* (1960). Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (1957); *Warrant for Genocide* (1967). Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1798: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France* (tr. White, 1973).

[13] Rudolf Virchow, *Wissenschaftlische Abhandlungen*, (I, 1849), p. 56.

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amidst the immense pride derived from his origin. He was capable of showing affection, and prone to inspire it in those who approached him. His conversation was brief and unsuggestive. He had not the art of drawing others out or of establishing intimate relations with them; nor any facility in expressing his views. He had the writer's habit and a certain amount of the author's self-love. His dissimulation, which was the deep dissimulation of a man who has spent his life in plots was assisted in a remarkable way by the immobility of his features and his want of expression: for his eyes were dull and opaque, like the thick glass used to light the cabins of ships, which admits the light but cannot be seen through. Careless of danger, he possessed a fine, cool courage in days of crisis; and at the same time—a common thing enough—he was very vacillating in his plans. He was often seen to change his direction, to advance, hesitate, draw back, to his great detriment: for the nation had chosen him in order to dare all things, and what it expected from him was audacity and not prudence. It was said that he had always been greatly addicted to pleasures, and not very delicate in his choice of them. This passion for vulgar enjoyment and his taste for luxury had increased still more with the facilities offered by his position. Each day he wore out his energy in indulgence, and deadened and degraded even his ambition. His intelligence was incoherent, confused, filled with great but ill-assorted thoughts, which he borrowed now from the examples of Napoleon, now from socialistic theories, sometimes from recollections of England, where he had lived: very different, and often very contrary, sources. These he had laboriously collected in his solitary meditations, far removed from the contact of men and facts, for he was naturally a dreamer and a visionary. But when he was forced to emerge from these vague, vast regions in order to confine his mind to the limits of a piece of business, it showed itself to be capable of justice, sometimes of subtlety and compass, and even of a certain depth, but never sure, and always prepared to place a grotesque idea by the side of a correct one."

And then Tocqueville comes to the point:

> Generally, it was difficult to come into long and very close contact with him without discovering a little vein of madness running through his better sense, the sight of which always recalled the escapades of his youth, and served to explain them.
>
> It may be admitted, for that matter, that it was his madness rather than his reason which, thanks to circumstances, caused his success and his force: for the world is a strange theatre. There are moments in it when the worst plays are those which succeed best. If Louis Napoleon had been a wise man, or a man of genius, he would never have become President of the Republic.
>
> He trusted in his star; he firmly believed himself to be the instrument of destiny and the necessary man. I have always believed that he was really convinced of his right, and I doubt whether Charles X was ever more infatuated with his legitimism than he with his. Moreover, he was quite as incapable of alleging a reason for his faith. Moreover, he desired above all things to meet with devotion to his person and his cause, as though his person and his cause were such as to be able to arouse devotion: merit annoyed him when it displayed ever so little independence. He wanted believers in his star, and vulgar worshippers of his fortune.
>
> This was the man whom the need of a chief and the power of a memory had placed at the head of France, and with whom we would have to govern.[14]

"He trusted in his star." The very same words are echoed over a century later by another shrewd observer with close access to a major historical figure, who brings us back to our point of departure:

> If [wrote Albert Speer] there was any fundamental insanity in Hitler it was this unshakable belief in his lucky star. He was by nature a religious man, but his capacity for belief had been perverted into belief in himself.[15]

HOW MUCH MORE AUTHORITY is carried by those two sentences than by all Dr Langer's speculations. And Speer is able to add something more for, unlike the clear-sighted Tocqueville, he himself became star-struck and later, emerging from his astral nightmare, attempted to analyse his condition in retrospect. What he has to say is of clinical as well as historical significance:

> I have always thought it was a most valuable trait to recognise reality and not to pursue delusions. But when I now think over my life up to and including the years of imprisonment, there was no period in which I was free of delusory notions. The departure from reality . . . was no peculiarity of the National Socialist régime. But in normal circumstances people who turn their backs on reality are soon set straight by the mockery and criticism of those around them which makes them aware they have lost credibility. In the Third Reich there were no such correctives, especially for those who belonged to the upper stratum. On the contrary, every self-deception was multiplied as in a hall of distorting

[14] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections* (tr. de Mattos, 1959), p. 226.
[15] Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (1971), p. 398.

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> mirrors, becoming a repeatedly confirmed picture of a fantastical dream world which no longer bore any relationship to the grim outside world. In those mirrors I could see nothing but my own face reproduced many times over. No external factors disturbed the uniformity of hundreds of unchanging faces, all mine. . . .

EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS of this quality are necessarily rare, and the historian's study of mentally aberrant figures depends mostly on a process of reconstruction from available evidence which may include contemporary medical documentation and, in more recent times, psychiatric assessment. One category of such individuals contains the assassin who, as "*R*" pointed out in ENCOUNTER recently, "is of particular interest because, if he aims high enough, he is capable of producing historical effects out of all proportion to his individual objectives or to the means at his disposal." [16] The manner in which the historian can take advantage of this situation has been effectively illustrated by Professor Charles E. Rosenberg in his penetrating study of the case of Charles Guiteau who shot President Garfield in 1881 and whose subsequent trial attracted widespread attention. [17] Rosenberg's sources included the extensive psychiatric reports and opinions of the day which he was able to place in a wider perspective to examine the climate of opinion concerning "moral insanity" in late 19th-century America. In so doing he has demonstrated how the material can be of value to the historian because of his concern with "the social nuances of social attitude inevitably revealed during a criminal process."

Without access to the medical evidence, however, the historian's task becomes much more difficult for he is compelled to become an amateur psychopathologist. Roger Howell has recently illustrated the problems in his account of some of the conflicting opinions which have been expressed about Cromwell's personality, pointing out the quite different but equally questionable approaches which have led Gustav Bychowski to postulate "processes of forcible repression of the Oedipus complex" and Christopher Hill to suggest that the Lord Protector possessed "some of the qualities associated with a manic-depressive." [18]

THE PSYCHOPATHOLOGIST as amateur historian confronts the problem in reverse. Probably the most widely-known and influential works in this genre are Erikson's studies of Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi. Erikson himself has provided a characteristically frank account of how he attempted to combine historical research with his experience of psycho-analytical theory and method, concluding that the historian, "like the clinician, must serve the curious process by which selected portions of the past impose themselves on our renewed awareness and claim continued actuality in our contemporary commitments." [19] In the event his psycho-biographies, drawing on his subjects' recorded fantasies, dreams and symbolic behaviour, are carefully constructed imaginative constructs based on his view of the key stages in the cycles of human development which he claims to be universal. Persuasively written as it is, however, Erikson's work fails to carry conviction at more than one level. Even if the psychoanalytical theory of psychological development in a particular culture and a particular epoch be accepted as a working hypothesis, its scientific foundations are still dubious and an extended application exposes it to Febvre's pointed comment in his own study of Martin Luther:

> A Freudian Luther is so easy to imagine that one feels not the least curiosity or wish to prosecute the acquaintance . . . . Might one not with an equal facility conjure up a Lutheran Freud and observe how completely the illustrious father of psychoanalysis exemplified permanent traits of the German national genius of which Luther in his day was so notable an exponent? . . . [20]

Secondly, with regard to the method employed, the therapeutic dialogue which constitutes Erikson's model has been criticised on its own terms as "devoid of the self-correction and self-transcendence implied in the dyadic interplay of psychotherapy." [21] Finally, from the standpoint of the historian, even so sympathetic a critic as Frank Manuel cannot accept Erikson's claim to have characterised an historical as distinct from an individual typology, and he is forced to conclude that "the general relationship between the world figure and his age is not advanced much beyond Hegel's lectures. . . ."

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[16] "*R*", "Column", ENCOUNTER (April 1978), p. 33.

[17] Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Trial of the Assassin Guiteau* (1968), p. 268.

[18] Roger Howell, Jr., "Cromwell's Personality: The Problems and Promises of a Psycho-historical Approach," *Biography* (Winter 1978), pp. 41–61. G. Bychowski, "Oliver Cromwell and the Puritan Revolution: A Chapter on the Psychology of Dictatorship", *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Psychopathology and Quarterly Review of Psychiatry and Neurology* (7, 1945), pp. 281–309. Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (1970), p. 193.

[19] Erik H. Erikson, "On the Nature of Psycho-Historical Evidence: In Search of Gandhi", *Daedalus* (Summer, 1968), pp. 695–730.

[20] Lucien Febvre, *Martin Luther and Destiny* (tr. Tapley, 1929).

[21] Frederick Wyatt, "Notes on the Scope of the Psycho-historical Approach", *International Journal of Psychiatry*, 8, no. 1 (1969), 488–492.

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WHAT, THEN, CAN be done?

A pointer could be provided by these contributions from anthropology which appear to have much in common with the historical field, not only, as Keith Thomas has observed, because anthropologists study societies as a whole but because they have "direct experience of matters about which historians have only read in books."

Much the same might be said of psychiatry, for the clinical psychiatrist, unlike the psycho-analyst, is constantly concerned with the patient's personal and social orbit in arriving at a diagnostic formulation and a plan of treatment which must take account of such factors as the influence of cultural phenomena on the causation, phenomenology, and course of mental disorders. To have this approach incorporate time as well as space requires, however, a full awareness of the historical milieu in which the individual is situated, a task which calls for a double training beyond the experience of all but a small number of workers. A notable exception is Dr Jean Starobinski who, in his study of Rousseau, has combined the critical apparatus of a man of letters steeped in French intellectual history with the medico-scientific approach of a trained psychiatrist.[22]

There are, unfortunately, few scholars with expertise of this type. Perhaps they will become more frequent when the psychiatrist and the historian are more familiar with each other's discipline. Meanwhile it may be useful for representatives of both to indulge in collaborative enquiry, if only to illuminate the differences in standpoint as well as the areas of mutual interest. By way of example I would cite the remote and essentially unimportant 17th-century Welsh preacher, Arise Evans. Christopher Hill, in his detailed and scholarly essay, rightly calls Evans "a tiny footnote to history", a man whose insignificant life becomes a peg on which to hang more important historical questions—the relationship between Wales and England, the attitude of the common man to the great issues of the day, the possible implications of Evans' monarchist and episcopalian views expressed publicly during the interregnum.[23] The fact that he underwent at least one episode of insanity is fully documented but the sort of issue this raises for the psychiatrist—the diagnosis of the condition, the significance of his millenarian ideas and hallucinatory experiences, the nature of his adaptation to the society of his time—fall outside the scope of traditional historical curiosity. Nevertheless, even after three centuries they can lend themselves to an at least partial assessment.

If, as G. M. Young suggested, one of the tasks of the historian is to read until he hears people talking, the psychiatrist will certainly be interested in what some of them had to say.

[22] Keith Thomas. "History and Anthropology." *Past and Present,* (24, 1963), pp. 3–24. Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: la Transparence et l'Obstacle* (Paris, 1971).

[23] Christopher Hill, "Arise Evans: Welshman in London" in *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England* (1974), pp. 48–77. Christopher Hill and Michael Shepherd, "The Case of Arise Evans: a Historico-psychiatric Study", *Psychological Medicine* (6, 1976), pp. 351–358.

Sebastian

The arrows' incisions ooze prettily
and not too much. The pale still-upright flesh
an officer of the Praetorian Guard.
Fleched shafts point backwards to a firing-squad.
Sentenced for faith in Christ, but suffering
shamelessly and the painters enjoying it
too much, suggesting God thrives, as they thrive
on paint, on blood. God nurses his wounds.

Sebastian left for dead, but Castulus'
widow heals him. His wounds not stigmata:
they shut and stop leaking. He witnesses
till Diocletian says barbs were too good.
Cudgels suit. Cudgel him to death. The squad
takes cudgels in both hands, makes sure this time.
This is not pretty. Renaissance painters
don't choose this. Man, unrecognisable.

Paul Hyland

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NOTES & TOPICS

London Commentary

On Britain's Decline

Democratic Contradictions—By RONALD BUTT

THE FAULT, we have been told these last twenty years at least, lies not in ourselves but in our institutions that we are underlings. Since Britain fell into serious decline, we have been advised successively that, if only we would devise suitable organisations to enable both sides of industry to agree on a national economic plan, or on the control of incomes and prices; or if we would equip the House of Commons with investigative specialist committees on the Washington model; or if we would pass a Bill of Rights; or if we would reform the Civil Service so as to uproot the hegemony of Oxford and Cambridge generalists; or if we would adopt a more proportional electoral system (the latest nostrum) then we could enjoy the kind of renaissance to which our natural virtues as a nation entitle us.

To all this advice we have listened respectfully, giving it the same kind of desperate but confused attention that a possibly hopeless case pays to the distinguished doctor who is suggesting a treatment of last resort. At the drop of a hat by a publisher, editor, or television producer, recipes for institutional regeneration have been produced by economics and politics dons, by professional committee-sitters and by students of Parliament. There has even been some consequential action.

Economically, each recent Government has added something new to the welter of quasi-governmental bodies which exist to promote "growth", to control pay and prices, and to arbitrate on remuneration. Administratively we have reformed the Civil Service, with the kind assistance of Lord Crowther-Hunt. Politically, the renewed outburst of demands for the reform of parliamentary procedure in the 1960s led Richard Crossman to attempt to establish a few specialist committees to shadow and probe Government departments—though he sensibly did not try to apply one to the economy (since it would be bound to divide on party lines under our parliamentary system, as it does not where the American President is not dependent on Congressional votes for survival).

Yet it cannot be said that any of these changes have done anything of substance to improve the state of Britain which has, indeed, steadily deteriorated while we have tinkered with institution-building. In fact, the solution of political problems by reform of parliamentary procedure has now fallen somewhat out of fashion, and radical opinion has modulated to a new theme.

THE ARGUMENT HAS MOVED to electoral reform as a means of producing a system of parliamentary representation that can be said to reflect more accurately the proportion of votes cast for the various parties. It is, however, agreed by respectable opinion that popular voting (actual or potential) should not be represented *too* accurately. We are therefore advised to adopt some such system as the German (on which the "Blak-Hansard Society model" is based), with built-in devices to exclude extremist parties and to prevent the proliferation of parties that would fragment the House of Commons. Ideally, what is needed (say the advocates of electoral reform, who include Tories driven to it by the large loss of votes to the Liberals which caused their defeat in 1974) is a three-party system, allowing a much bigger place to the centre-Liberal party. That this would probably give the centre-Liberal party an almost permanently decisive role in determining which of the other two parties it was prepared to put into coalition office does not appear to worry Conservative electoral reformers. Their German equivalent (more or less) in the Christian

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Democratic Union may look enviously on our system, fearful lest theirs may keep them persistently out of office as a result of the German Liberal (FDP) and Social Democratic alliance—but this does not make our own Conservative electoral reformers pause. The fact that the sort of Liberal Party led by Mr David Steel (a social democrat in spirit) would almost certainly behave likewise with the Labour Party does not disturb such Tories. For them, reform is largely a device to neutralise the Labour Left and that seems to be a sufficient political goal for them.

IN SHORT, parliamentary reform is seen as a desirable way of creating a permanent hegemony of passionate moderates, cast in the collective image of Mr Roy Jenkins, Mr David Steel, Mrs Shirley Williams, and Lord (Robert) Carr. The fact that the consequence would almost certainly be to maintain coalitions in power (at least, until something gave under the strain) is not seen as a disadvantage. For the object of the change is to enthrone "moderation" and to avoid too many changes of policy which (say the advocates of electoral reform) are bad for Britain. Now as it happens, here is the first clue to what is really wrong with Britain. For ought not the electorate to have a genuine chance to choose between genuinely different policies, and to elect new governments to reverse policies? In a true democracy, the answer must surely be that it ought—which suggests that a true democracy is not quite what moderates, centrists, and electoral reformers are really after.

SUCH, THEN, ARE some of the mechanistic solutions that are advanced for dealing with the British sickness. The one explanation seldom contemplated, and which most people are unwilling to countenance, is that we are in a decline as a result of one of those historic shifts in the temper and psyche of a nation for which there is no easy explanation, and no simple institutional cure. Yet all the outward signs suggest that we have fallen into the sort of condition in which the essential cement of a society tends to crumble, its cohesion to be damaged, and its will to be gravely weakened, if not destroyed. Our society is one that shows every sign of a "failure of nerve" in those who have responsibility for government, and an atrophy in the sense of purpose and loyalty among the governed. We summon up enough energy to get over immediate short-term crises; but we make no serious effort to mend our ways and our habits of behaviour, and show no confidence in the possibility of curing the basic disease—the dispassionate study of which, as though it had nothing to do with ourselves, has now become something like a national hobby.

Other European countries also have their own brand of unease, their fear of violence and instability. Even so, Britain shows every sign of a destruction of individual, civic, and productive energy which is exceptional on any comparison with those European states most like ourselves. Sophisticated liberal Americans, who enjoy falling in love with our way of life, much as a visitor from the big city falls in love with the quaintness of half-timbered rural squalor, sometimes argue that we really like things as they are because we have maturely discovered that there is more to life than the rat-race of working, making-it, and spending. They certainly make it quite clear that they would like us to like it as it is. The managers of Pan-Am understandably pitched into the inefficiencies of Heathrow airport during this winter's snow-up as inexcusable and unparalleled anywhere else in Europe; but the sentimental American seems to assume that we like doing things badly and lethargically.

Yet I think we do not. Some of us might prefer to live in a non-industrial society, but if we are living in an industrial society there is not much to be said for living in it inefficiently. We are therefore not proud of our poor performance or of the assumption we have about each other most of the time, that goods and services will not turn up when they are due, and that undertakings will not be fulfilled. Most of us find it dispiriting to live in a community that is crippled by strikes each winter, that has its honesty destroyed by inflation—and I doubt whether many of us are indifferent to the dirty streets, the telephones that do not work, and the grubby underground stations. I do not think we like a society in which the old, the sick, and the poor are the main hostages in the power-struggle for wages. We may feel too dispirited to do anything about these things, but we do not enjoy them.

Such an extraordinary disintegration of will and of the sense of community—so remarkable a lapse from any agreed framework of civic and personal morality—can, of course, be most obviously ascribed to the decline of religious (and therefore moral) certainties, and to the discrediting of patriotism. No society prospers self-confidently without a basis of shared values, and without an appeal to these values, implicitly or explicitly, by its government. We do not have to like Communist societies to accept that much of their strength and self-confidence arises from their claim to a basis of moral certainty. Such was also once the claim of the free Western societies. But it is hard to discern anything that can seriously be regarded as a generally shared basis of moral values in Britain as a community today.

THE DEEPER TRUTH, HOWEVER, is that no government, arbitrary or free, succeeds except on the basis of consent—whether consent is secured by force or

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by propaganda, or whether it is freely given. In Britain there are now signs that sections of the nation and individuals have, where they can get away with it, withdrawn their consent to the sort of government they have. They are seeking their own solutions to their own problems in their own interest as best they can, regardless of others, in the belief that everyone else is doing likewise.

At every stage of our history, obtaining the necessary consent has been the basis of successful government. The Witan and the medieval King's Council were not elected bodies; they were the King's appointments. Yet in a deeper sense they also had a "representative" function since the King naturally summoned to advise him those who, if they were not consulted, and did not give their consent, had the power and the following to upset his government. Later, when knights and burgesses were summoned to Parliament, it was not in obedience to a theory of civil liberties but because it was sensible to summon them to make sure that the required taxes could be levied and collected with their help. Later still, when Parliament won its crucial liberties from the Crown, it was because the facts of powers were on the side of those limited classes who were directly represented there. Finally, the necessity to ensure consent for government obliged these classes in turn to widen the franchise until at last parliamentary democracy was created.

YET NOW, to our bewilderment, we are seeing that in some way that we do not quite understand, parliamentary democracy is not working. It is not providing consent. This amazes us since we assume that we know all about parliamentary democracy. It is, we suppose, deep-rooted in us. We know about liberty and the law; about Magna Carta and Habeas Corpus and an unarmed police. How can so old and tried a system not be working?

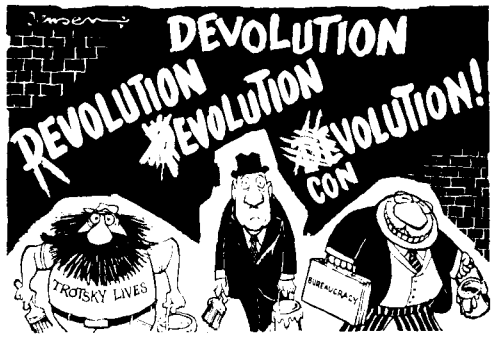
THE ANSWER IS, of course, that though Parliament is at least seven centuries old, democracy has been grafted on to it only very recently. It is not more than 60 years old if it is dated from universal male and partial female suffrage in 1918; it is barely 50 years old if it is dated from suffrage for all women equally. And it is arguable that Parliament worked better and controlled the government more effectively when it represented a smaller and more compact political nation than it does now.

It is not hard to see why. Democracy which is still experimental has been obliged to work crudely through huge national parties appealing for mass votes. These parties have been obliged to average out and weaken their political offerings so as to appeal to the largest possible number, and the worst consequence of this has been the subjection, by both parties, of policies for economic management to the need for maximum popularity. Further, these parties have agglomerated power and responsibility for almost every important aspect of each individual's life and have been unable to use it properly. They have laid down criteria that they have been unable to satisfy, and raised hopes they could not fulfil.

The state has assumed responsibility for universal education, health care, accommodation, full employment and industrial growth; but it has been unable to discharge that responsibility adequately because both politicians and public have acted as though the resources needed would be available irrespective of willingness to impose the disciplines to provide them. Neither the self-discipline adopted by an individual to achieve his chosen ends nor the discipline imposed by the state to realise its objectives in a more arbitrary society have been applied.

The problem is essentially one of social democracy—by which I do not narrowly mean the sort of right-wing socialism favoured by (say) Mrs Shirley Williams, but rather the particular kind of social state that has grown up in Britain, and which Conservative as well as Labour Governments have furthered, even though its roots were planted by the Attlee Government. It must also be stressed that I am not attacking state responsibility for welfare in what might be called conventional free-market terms. It obviously makes no sense to lay all Britain's ills at the door of social democracy in that sense when we observe that other European countries also operate social democracy to provide the basis for every citizen's welfare, and yet do not suffer from the kind of enervated malaise that afflicts us.

Germany, for instance, is a social-democratic state in a sense that has nothing to do with the fact that a Social Democratic party happens to be in power there now. Indeed, Germany has had a "welfare state" tradition since Bismarck's provisions for pensions and state insurance; and Germany today has a constitution that is built on the assertion that it is a "social state based on the rule of law" and gives the state a special obligation to



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enable each individual to live a life of human dignity. Germany provides for the existence of a welfare system that includes a state health insurance scheme, insurance to cover the loss of earnings, and a better state pension than we have.

In Germany, however, social security rests on a much more genuine contribution principle than it does here. It does not operate at the expense of financial rectitude; it does not carry a deadweight of bureaucracy as ours does; it is not accompanied by the direct involvement of the state in industry. The economic function of the state is rather to determine the financial conditions under which private industry works; to provide "global guidance" for industry to work competitively; and to keep inflation at bay.

PART OF Britain's problem, then, arises from the fact that we have a form of social democracy that operates without proper regard for accountability and responsibility. But it would be quite wrong to go on from that to suppose that the answer is to diminish the state's function of providing the framework, the guarantees, and the conditions of social security. If we are to revive *consent for government*, such concern should become more effective, not less. It is the form that should change, not the objective.

The failure of the "welfare state" as we know it is one consequence of a wider failure to respond, through the framework of parliamentary democracy, to the needs of various classes in society to which an adequate response must be made if we are to return to social stability. It is the failure to respond in this way that has led to the breakdown of consent and the fragmentation of the old national loyalty into rival sectional interests. This is fundamentally a political problem to which no politicians have responded with imagination. Instead, they have deliberately removed from the individual his capacity to look after himself and have handed it to the state, which has then delivered sub-standard goods.

At the same time, the income that the individual is allowed to earn is cursorily controlled to make good the state's lapse into inflation; and the politicians, instead of trusting social and parliamentary democracy, have deliberately concentrated on bargaining with sectional interests, which they have built up in the process. They have done everything they could to encourage management to deal with Unions rather than individuals; and they have done nothing to encourage management to turn to any useful kind of industrial participation that would help the individual worker to accept that the prosperity of his work-place is his own prosperity. In these circumstances, is it surprising that so many have preferred to give their principal obedience and loyalty to their Union instead of to the Community?

THERE IS, HOWEVER, another way in which the politicians have deliberately refused to respond to public opinion and instincts. Far too often they have abdicated their power on social questions that affect the lives and happiness of the majority of citizens to unrepresentative pressure groups and to the demands of minority opinion (often because of the power that these groups exert through the media of communications). What ought to be essentially political questions because they concern policy and the community have been handed over to the discretion of what is regarded as "expert" or "objective" or so-called neutral opinion. Popular opinion has been spurned and the classic illustration of this process has been seen in the response of successive governments to public concern over immigration.

IF, THIRTY YEARS AGO, it had been put to the electorate that future policy would allow the creation of an immigrant community of the size we have had today (whether the accepted figures are of the "conservative" dimension favoured by the Home Office and the Runnymede Trust, or whether they are those suggested by Mr Enoch Powell, or whether they lie somewhere between these two) it is quite inconceivable that the public would have acquiesced in the light of the tensions that would be bound to arise from immigration (of whatever sort) on such a scale.

Tactics were therefore adopted which deliberately smothered and circumvented public opinion. It was said that controls were "racialist" and that they were unnecessary because the numbers involved were not significant—though whether, if the numbers could have been proved to be significant, the "racialist" argument would still have been maintained is anyone's guess. It was first said that there was "no problem" and every measure of control was fought in such a way as to make it ineffective. Then, when it was undeniable that a "community problem" had been created, it was said that it was too late to talk about strengthening future controls and that it was right, instead, to concentrate on laws to impose "good race relations."

In other social matters of importance to the life of the ordinary working citizen, the responses have also not been to democracy but to the dominant pressure groups which are the arbiters of "liberal" standards. This is true about the removal of almost all restraints on what may be published and sold, however obscene and brutal. It is true about government administration and law-making that affects family life (for instance, in the authorisation by the Department of Health and Social Security for doctors to ignore the legal age of consent and prescribe contraceptives for under-age children without informing parents).

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THE APPROVED PRESSURE GROUPS, many of which have over-lapping membership, are very powerful. They have close connections with Whitehall and with the media which often seek their guidance as a kind of "expert" incontrovertible high truth. The result has been the fashioning of a society from which too many people feel alienated and from which the roots of traditional feelings and instincts have been too brutally cut away.

Yet any nation or tribe needs its own roots if it is to survive healthily. Even the rapidity with which Britain has been turned into a multi-racial community is bound to encourage separate loyalties which do not assist cohesion. To say as much is, of course, to provoke the wrath of the righteous; it is to break one of the few taboos encouraged by the new liberal establishment. Yet if a distinguished historian of Anglo-Saxon England can account for the greater stability of Wessex compared with Northumbria by Wessex's greater ethnic homogeneity, may we not at least consider objectively whether the same principle is applicable to the growth of separate ethnic communities and loyalties in Britain today?

ALL THESE PROBLEMS have arisen not from the mechanics of our parliamentary institutions but from the failure of the political parties using them to give proper leadership to democracy, which means responding to the nation's legitimate instincts (all communities in it) as well as directing them. Instead, we have been offered a simulacrum of democracy under the cloak of which the real direction of society is determined by the manoeuvres of unrepresentative bodies, while the politicians concentrate on manipulating the economy to help them buy votes. Any proposal to respond candidly to popular feelings is dismissed (to borrow the words of Mr Roy Hattersley) as "vulgar populism." It is hardly surprising if people feel that the idea of democracy raised hopes which the practice of politicians has dashed.

In his distinguished book *Democracy Ancient and Modern* Professor M. I. Finley challenged the élitist view of democracy, drew some important lessons from the ancient Athenian experience, and quoted a passage from an article with the "revealing" title "In Defence of Apathy", by W. H. Morris Jones, a political scientist. This suggested that "many of the ideas connected with the general theme of a Duty to Vote belong properly to the totalitarian camp and are out of place in the vocabulary of liberal democracy. . . ." Political apathy is "a sign of understanding and tolerance of human variety", and has a "beneficial effect on the tone of political life" because it is a "more or less effective counter-force to the fanatics who constitute the real danger to liberal democracy."

THAT, I THINK, sums it up. The "liberal" establishment has relied on the apathy of the electorate to enable it to re-shape society to an approved model—only to find that its control of events is now disintegrating. Parliamentary democracy is going wrong not because it is too democratic but because it is not democratic enough; because it is too often used as a façade behind which devoted campaigners of minority interests can bring the sort of society they approve of into existence without any real reference to the people. Old loyalties, old patriotism, and old nationhood have been cut up and a "new society" that is both alienated and in danger of fragmentation has been bribed by consumer booms, punished by curbs and controls, and deprived of responsibility. When a trade union offers a clear-cut notion of belonging (even if it is directed against members of other unions) in such a society—when each individual comes to think that trying hard is no longer worthwhile because the other chap will only do the minimum—is it surprising that society is staggering? The fault is not too much democracy but too little.

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Scandalising Samuel Beckett

The Coarse Art of Biography—By MARTIN ESSLIN

"RUNNING to 640 pages with another 80 pages of notes", said Irving Wardle in *The Times* (25 September 1978), "the book has all the appearance of a work of scholarship, and it is no pleasure to me to record that when I made a sample check with two much-quoted British sources, both vehemently dissociated themselves from it. . . ." Note: all the *appearance* of scholarship, but when a check is made, the check bounces. Yet with the customary kindness and fairness of British courtesy, Irving Wardle then breezily brushed any doubts aside: "That is worrying, but I think it is outweighed by the fact that Dr Bair is manifestly a lover of Beckett's work and that the story she tells is too extraordinary for anyone, least of all a celebrity-hunting hack, to have invented . . . ." Note: inaccuracy of fact can be outweighed by the author of a biography seeming to like its subject. Strange logic indeed! And stranger still: an *ordinary* story could have been invented; but an extraordinary story is just too extraordinary for that. Well, let us have a look at the evidence.

Reviewing Deirdre Bair's biography, *Samuel Beckett*,[1] in the *Herald Tribune* of 29 June 1978, A. J. Leventhal, one of Beckett's oldest and closest friends, wrote:

> Miss Bair tells an extraordinary story of Beckett's first meeting with the woman who was to become his wife. As the writer lay bleeding on the ground [having been stabbed in a Paris street by a pimp] a young woman appeared providentially on the scene, she "happened by" in the biographer's words. Calmly she took over from Beckett's distraught companions, pillowed the victim on a borrowed overcoat and called an ambulance. The seeds for romance were planted. So far the Myth. One that persists like the one that makes Beckett Joyce's secretary. The facts are that Beckett met Suzanne Dumesnil on a previous occasion, that the latter learned of the incident in the newspapers and hurried to the hospital to be of help. . . .

So much for the remarkable view that the "extraordinariness" of a story is a guarantee of its truth, a view incidentally which seems to be shared by other reviewers, e.g. Professor Christopher Ricks who remarked, in *The Sunday Times* (17 September 1978), that the book "may be indiscriminate, chatty, sometimes inaccurate, but it does bring together an extraordinary amount of fascinating material—people, letters, incidents, mysteries. . . . " The inaccuracy of the material pales, in Professor Ricks' view, before its fascination, enabling him to conclude: "Deirdre Bair has a gripping, clawing tale to tell" (including the story of the miraculous rescue by an unknown maiden "happening by" on the scene of the stabbing, which he has swallowed hook, line and sinker as evidenced by the fact that he singles it out for special mention).

But is this not a scholarly book, as indicated by more than 80 pages of footnotes? These, as Irving Wardle so rightly noticed, provide the *appearance* of scholarliness. But let us see how the obviously false, over-romanticised story is backed up in these notes. The relevant footnote states that "among those whose interviews helped me to form an interpretation of the stabbing incident are . . ."—and there follow seven names—"also Samuel Beckett's letters to Thomas McGreevy, George Reavey and Arland Ussher." Clearly the information supplied by these sources was wrong, or it was wrongly "interpreted." Here another observation in A. J. Leventhal's critique becomes relevant: " . . . there are so many errors in the remarks that I myself am supposed to have made that I am driven to doubt the accuracy of other attributions."

The vast bulk of the hundreds of footnotes in the 80 pages of notes that give the book its appearance of scholarliness are in fact references to such remarks made in conversation with the author. So in point of fact these footnotes represent mostly hearsay evidence wrongly "interpreted" (in other

[1] *Samuel Beckett: A Biography*. By DEIRDRE BAIR. Jonathan Cape, £8.50; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich $19.95.

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words, misunderstood or otherwise distorted). I should hasten to add that I do not think that such distortions are due to any deliberate intention of the author. No. They spring from what is much worse: lack of the necessary background to understand the implications of many of the facts she may have been told, and a lack of critical methodology which would have enabled her to sift the legends from the facts.

ANY CLOSE READING of the book by someone familiar with Samuel Beckett and the intellectual climate from which he springs would be bound to reveal that Ms Bair lacks the basic requirements for a biographer of such a man. For example: to deal with the works and to decipher the letters of a man who writes in French as well as English, and who is deeply immersed in Italian, German, Latin and Greek, one would presuppose a minimum knowledge of these languages in the biographer. What is one then to think of Ms Bair's obvious ignorance of French, as shown for example by her seriously believing that the sentence "The bastard, he does not exist" in *Endgame*, which caused such difficulty with the British theatrical censor, was much more leniently dealt with in France (where incidentally there is no censorship of the stage: a knowledge of local theatre conditions might be another qualification for the biographer of a playwright); for, as Ms Bair remarks: "Only in French could the deity be thus vilified" (p. 487). In fact the French expression Beckett used in this line is *"salaud"*—which does *not* mean bastard, is much weaker and far less, if at all, blasphemous. If this were just one isolated instance of the fact that Ms Bair has either not looked at or not understood the French text of one of Beckett's major works, it might be the result of a simple slip. But examples of her ignorance abound. It would be tedious to list them all—but on p. 493 she quotes a remark by Beckett, referring to the fact that the Irish had to become brilliant to compensate for their oppression by the English, as follows: *"Il nous ailes en culer à la gloire"* a strange remark indeed, which however Ms Bair says "he translated immediately as 'They have buggered us into glory!' " Now this surely cannot merely be a slip in the proof-reading. Even someone who has had three or four lessons of elementary French must know that *ailes* cannot possibly be a form of the verb *avoir*, and that *en culer* cannot possibly be a past participle, quite apart from all the other mistakes in that short sentence. Needless to say, there *is* a footnote, and it attributes that farrago of misunderstood French to a conversation with someone who told the story. (No doubt correctly: but if one does not know even the conjugation of *avoir* one must surely be at a disadvantage in "interpreting" such verbal information.)

Beckett knows German, and quotes German in his poems and letters. What is one to think of a biographer of a learned man who can write (p. 54) that "Beckett found himself fascinated by the regularity, precision and rigid structure of the German language, *so different from the Romance Languages he had studied . . .*" (my italics). Anyone who can make a remark like that discloses total ignorance of all the languages in question. No wonder that quotations in German in the book are grotesquely wrong. All this seems to me far removed from even a superficial appearance of scholarship. Getting to know a foreign language may well be a difficult feat. But checking a place name is surely within the range of a "scholarly" biographer. What are we to think of Beckett (p. 244) having "to eliminate Hellenstadt and Guedinburg from his itinerary" during a trip to Germany? Those cities do not exist, and are probably misreadings of Beckett's admittedly difficult handwriting for—I presume—Halberstadt and Quedlinburg. Would not a "scholar" have made *some* attempt to establish the geographical context of Beckett's remark, and at least looked at a map or a gazetteer to establish a correct reading of the letter being quoted? Needless to say, many other German place names are equally misspelt.

That classical education is, alas, no longer a requirement for being called a scholar must now be taken for granted. Nevertheless, if he or she does give classical derivations, they should be checked. Ms Bair blithely asserts that *horo* means hour in Greek (p. 103) which it does not: the word *hora* or *hore* merely means a point in time, so both the form of the word and the translation are far off the mark. And she opines that Saposcat, the name of a character in *Malone Dies*, is derived from "Sapo" (Greek for "wisdom"). Well, search me, *sapo* never meant wisdom in my small Greek; in my little Latin the syllable "sap" was the connection with wisdom. But, then, what does the obscure difference between Latin and Greek matter?

WHAT ABOUT our own dear *lingua franca*? Ms Bair, who (as the blurb informs us)"teaches now in the English department of the University of Pennsylvania", is no great shakes there either. She seems to think that someone who is being taught by a tutor is a "tutee" (p. 38), that people who live alone and see few friends lead a "hermetic" life (p. 95), presumably mixing up *hermetic* (which means magical, occult) with *eremitic*. She writes that Jack McGowran had made his Beckett evening by "using a pastiche of writings to create a dramatic unity" which seems to show that she thinks pastiche means collage. Pedantic? Perhaps. Yet *le style c'est l'homme* and such solecisms do not, to me, add up to an image of "scholarship." Little slips may not destroy the substance, but they

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certainly destroy one's basic confidence in the author's qualifications for her task.

AND WHEN it comes to the substance, can a work undertaken with so little of the basic background yield real insights? There *is* a lot of material here. Beckett's letters to various of his friends have landed in various libraries and have become accessible; Ms Bair has looked at all these, notably at his voluminous correspondence with Thomas McGreevy who was a close friend and confidant of Beckett in his early years. But then, to judge from Ms Bair's attempts to summarise and review Beckett's own writings, or those accessible to her in English, she does not have any great understanding of his literary personality. The summaries she provides are utterly naïve, often inaccurate, and never rise above the level of a schoolgirl's essay. She gets as far as spotting that Beckett's relationship to his mother was important. But her amateur psychoanalysing of that relationship is pitifully simple-minded, and, moreover, shows her inability to read Beckett's own work which contains that relationship in all its complexity, love, and horror.

A book like this cannot be ignored, for it raises important issues. It is, above all, a horrifying symptom of the decline of standards in our literary culture. Ms Bair says that she embarked on writing it because "in 1971 I was a doctoral candidate in search of a dissertation topic." That in itself seems to me to be a dismal and damaging admission. Surely a book of this ambition and bulk would have to be the result of some consuming passion, a wild enthusiasm for the author concerned, and thus spring from an intensity of initial motivations which would exclude the cool, calculated search for a Ph.D. thesis. Be that as it may, there is no indication whether the book led to a doctorate; nor is the university mentioned which might have granted it, perhaps wisely so.

For the question surely arises: can a *scholarly* biography be written about a man who is still living? Surely this is a methodological impossibility? Ms Bair's book proves it. She herself admits that "for every person I interviewed there were at least two or three who were inaccessible." That is one difficulty; but it is by no means the worst. By the very nature of the material, Beckett's early years are more fully dealt with than the later ones. The nearer the biographer gets to the present the thinner, more scattered and haphazard, less relevant becomes the available material. As the book progresses it markedly and obviously deteriorates—until, at the end, it is reduced to mere idle gossip. That difficulty would be present even if the material were properly handled. But here, quite apart from the glaring inadequacies of the author's

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background knowledge, the very method of presentation is wrongheaded. All the footnotes notwithstanding, Ms Bair adopts the story-telling method of a novelist, rather than that of a scholar. Having obtained what she (often unsoundly) regards as a fact, she begins to tell her story from Beckett's point of view. She not only reports what he did, she becomes the omniscient narrator of her subject's thoughts and feelings:

> However grateful he was for the [Nobel] prize, it was still a source of unhappiness as it exacerbated his already strained situation with Suzanne [his wife]. The greater his success and acclamation had become, the greater her discontent had grown. In the past few years she had spent money wildly on personal adornment, and she had decorated her part of the apartment lavishly. In fact the discrepancy between her part of the apartment and his was so shocking that Beckett stopped inviting friends to visit because he could not bear their undisguised expressions of surprise.... The gulf between her ornamentation and his simplicity was indicative of more than their decorating tastes: it represented a chasm in their relationship which they no longer cared to bridge. She resented his fame and felt that he should have made a more public acknowledgment of her important role in bringing it about.... He felt he had demonstrated his gratitude to her by marrying her when both considered the ceremony a mockery.

How can Ms Bair *know* what Beckett thinks, what his wife thinks, and whether he considers his marriage a mockery? Not a thousand footnotes can excuse this style of story-telling. In fact the only footnote referring to this passage says: "The following information is from Jean Martin, Roger Blin, Josette Hayden, A. J. Leventhal, Marion Leigh and others" (p. 710). A. J. Leventhal for one insists that he has been misrepresented. And how can Jean Martin and Roger Blin, excellent actors though they are but by no means omnipresent in Mme Beckett's boudoir, know what she thinks about her husband's feelings about her? Of course, they *may* have talked about it to our charming biographer in those terms (I doubt it); but even if they did, what would it have amounted to? Nothing but gossip.

One can imagine how such a passage comes about. Someone may have overheard a husband telling his wife that something she wanted to buy was too expensive. That person may have reported such a remark to the biographer. Now, in true scholarly method, all that biographer could write would be: *XYZ* reported an incident in which *A* said to *B*: "Don't buy it! It is too expensive...." But in Ms Bair's methodology this becomes: *A* hates *B* because he deeply resents her terrible extravagance. *B* hates *A* because he is so mean to her...." No wonder the informants whose conversations have thus been transmuted are upset and hasten to assure the world that they never said such things. Again I should like to stress that I don't attribute to Ms Bair any desire to misrepresent. She is merely using an unacceptable methodology. A method in fact which leads a newspaper like *The Observer* (to its shame) to advertise extracts from this "scholarly" doctoral dissertation as THE SECRET LIFE OF SAMUEL BECKETT, including "his *vie de Bohème* of penury and love affairs in pre-war Paris", etc. The "scholarly doctoral thesis" has been transmuted into the worst kind of Sunday newspaper sensationalism....

THIS, THEN, raises a final issue which goes much beyond mere methodology and the difference between real and pseudo-scholarship. What are the ethics of such a biography? Is it permissible to publish the feelings (real or imaginary) of a living person towards the wife with whom he has to live for better or worse? Is it permissible to reveal to the subject of this exposure the names of his friends, probably innocent purveyors of the raw material for this deadly kind of gossip, in footnotes? And how can all this deliberately be done to a man who is known as a person morbidly averse to having his private life exposed to public curiosity? What recourse does the victim of such an assault against his privacy have? Is he to put advertisements into the newspapers proclaiming that he is *not* irritated by his wife's spending of his money? That all this should have happened to Samuel Beckett is the final Swiftian, the final Beckettian irony. It would be funny if it was not so terribly sad.

BUT WHAT OF THE "scholarly biographer's" ultimate argument, that Beckett had actually helped her, that he had supplied her with some material?

> We met in November 1971, with Beckett stressing how important his privacy is to him, but at the same time urging me to follow my inclinations. He would not help me he said, but he would not hinder me either. I told him it would be impossible for me to undertake such a massive project on the strength of that statement; as a scholar, I needed to have access to family records, correspondence, manuscripts, and had to be able to conduct interviews. He repeated that he would neither help nor hinder me and I was free to do as I wished in the matter.

Beckett is a man of a sensitive disposition and much subtlety; that perhaps made it difficult for him to communicate to academics with less sensitivity. Could Beckett *hinder* anyone who wanted to write about him? Surely not. Once a

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writer is in the public eye he cannot forbid any discussion. The statement surely merely meant that he did not want to help. Yet he did write some letters asking people to assist Ms Bair:

> Samuel Beckett was kind enough to see me whenever I went to Paris, even though I soon realized how much pain and embarrassment my questions caused him. He introduced me to his family and wrote letters on my behalf and all the while I am sure he did not want this book to be written and would have been grateful if I had abandoned it.

Pain, embarrassment, the wish that the project should be abandoned—and yet, with the sensitivity of a pachyderm, the intrepid explorer went on. One can only surmise why Beckett actually gave some assistance. I should hazard the guess that once he realised that nothing could deter Ms Bair he felt that at least some basic points should be accurate in the book. Or was it merely his unfailing kindness and old-world courtesy which made it difficult for him to say "no" to such insistent demands? Perhaps he thought that the kinder he showed himself the likelier it would be that sheer sympathy for him might get the better of his biographer's relentless determination to expose his "secret life"? But this is only speculation; and to go on would perpetuate Ms Bair's basic error of pretending to know what Samuel Beckett thought or felt.

WHAT IS, however, the book's final irony is precisely the fact that Ms Bair's pages abound in examples of Beckett's really extreme aversion to any probing into his private affairs. There is, to give but one instance, the story of Harold Hobson and Samuel Beckett going to a cricket match at Lord's together.

> Beckett was disconcerted several days later to see an article in the *Times* [she means *The Sunday Times*] in which Hobson had related most of their luncheon conversation. Even though it dealt entirely with cricket, Beckett was still unhappy because it was about his personal life, not about his work. . . . During lunch [i.e. in Paris some time later] he found the opportunity to ask Hobson for more discretion in writing about personal matters, to which Hobson readily agreed, expressing regret that he had unknowingly violated Beckett's confidence. Beckett assured Hobson that his integrity as a journalist had never been in question, but a personal idiosyncrasy compelled him to avoid the spotlight whenever possible.

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Imagine, if you can, the degree of insensitivity required to relate this story about the *suffering* caused to a man of Beckett's morbid shyness by the mere reporting of a few remarks of his about cricket by one of the most gentlemanly, discreet and kindly journalists, in the framework of a book containing the most vulgar novelistic probings into Beckett's marriage, health, love life, and relationships to his mother and brother!

A few pages later the matter becomes even more glaringly manifest. For here Ms Bair describes the genesis of one of the finest, and truly scholarly, books about Beckett—by Lawrence Harvey, who was writing about Beckett's poetry and criticism. Beckett agreed to give Harvey some assistance with biographical material:

> True to his promise, Harvey submitted the entire manuscript to Beckett in 1969, before it was published, but Beckett discovered that he was unable to bring himself to read it. The experience was too unnerving; he simply could not deal with it. He was shocked by his inability to control himself, but he recoiled from the manuscript with horror, as if he were Dorian Grey, looking into the mirror of his own imperfect self. He insisted that all but the barest details of his father's death and his mother's illness be excised completely. He removed all the names of persons who had been important to him. Then he gave the typescript to A. J. Leventhal and asked him to read it carefully and remove all further biographical references. . . .

So says the good lady who has just treated us to all the details, the more morbid the better, of Beckett's father's and mother's illnesses, his anal cysts and pus-filled boils and sundry tit-bits more, over a stretch of almost 600 pages! The degree of insensitivity must be called monstrous and unspeakable.

WHAT JUSTIFICATION can there have been for perpetrating a book which was bound to cause its subject and victim untold embarrassment and real suffering, without any chance of retaliation or refutation? Ms Bair has the answer at hand:

> I wrote the biography of Beckett because I was dissatisfied with existing studies of his writing. I felt that critics tended to try so hard to place Beckett in whatever particular theory or system they espoused that they ignored those works that did not fit, thus creating unexplainable gaps and blatant flaws. It seemed to me that many of the leading Beckett interpreters substituted their own brilliant intellectual gymnastics for what should have been solid, responsible scholarship; that they created studies that told more about the quality of the authors' minds than about Beckett's writings. This exasperating situation made me aware of the need for a factual foundation for all subsequent critical exegesis.

So the book was written to provide a solid foundation for criticism. It provides no such thing, because its facts are highly suspicious and, where they can be checked, unreliable.

I personally have been involved in about half-a-dozen events involving Beckett and the BBC that are mentioned in the book; in each particular instance Ms Bair's account is inaccurate and bears little resemblance to what actually happened. Other friends and associates of Beckett's who figure in the book have similarly found that episodes in which they were involved are misrepresented. Moreover, the methodology of the book is, as I have tried to point out, basically wrong. If—and that is arguable—so detailed a biographical study of Beckett is necessary to permit a true critical evaluation and study of his work, the whole task will have to be freshly undertaken. A book so abounding in misconceptions will be more of a hindrance than a help; it perpetuates legends and makes it necessary to disprove each erroneous statement or wrongly interpreted interview. Quite apart from all this, it is simply untrue that the best Beckett criticism—from Hugh Kenner, Ruby Cohn, John Fletcher, Lawrence Harvey, James Knowlson, John Pilling, Raymond Federman, Melvin Friedman, to name but a few—either tries to press Beckett's works into a preconceived system or, indeed, suffers from an insufficient knowledge of his biography. Many of the people concerned know Beckett well personally and know much more about him as a person—and indeed about his life—than Ms Bair could ever find out. And what is more, they have enough human sympathy and understanding of Beckett's personality to refrain from wanting to publicise their friend's private life.

The justification for the book's genesis is thus as spurious as its methodology.

It is this supposed *raison d'être* for the book which finally reveals its author's basic inability to grapple with its subject. Anyone who has seriously studied Beckett and his *oeuvre* must know that one of his basic convictions and cherished principles is the self-sufficiency and integrity of the work of art. A work of art, whether a play or a poem or a novel or a painting, must stand for itself. If it needs an *explanation* in order to be understood there is something wrong with it. As Beckett has stressed over and over again, if he knew who Godot was and whether he would actually come, he would have had to put it into the play. Anything else would have been cheating. This is not to say that there should not be criticism, exegesis, discussion. They constitute the *response* to the work of art, the expression of the experience of its public; and as such are quite legitimate. But the response does not

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complete the work of art; it is related to it, but not part of it. To say that a work of art cannot be understood unless one knows whether the author loved or loathed his mother is nonsense. We know no such thing about Sophocles or Shakespeare, and yet we write criticism, we can respond.

In Beckett's case the matter is even clearer. He is a writer who probes his own consciousness to unprecedented depths and with ruthless honesty. Many of the elements which make up Beckett's inner world into which he introduces us with total frankness are fragments of his real world; many more are imaginary—fantasy or fragments of his erudition. To have read Dante (which Ms Bair obviously has not: she thinks that the Belacqua episode in the *Purgatorio* contains a Latin quotation) is thus much more important for getting the sense of a passage in Beckett than some biographical trivia. In Ms Bair's case these biographical facts positively hinder her at times from understanding even the barest outline of Beckett's works. What relevance, for example, has it when she points out that the old prostitute with whom the 69-year-old Krapp has some painful senile intercourse bears the name of his Aunt Cissie who was nicknamed Fanny? Are we to suppose that Beckett is suggesting that his old aunt was a prostitute? Or that he had intercourse with her? And are there not more obvious reasons why an old prostitute should bear the by no means unusual, even suggestive name "Fanny"?

This is but one, glaringly obvious, example of the naïvety of the basic concept behind a book of this kind. Ms Bair is only too eager to detect autobiographical elements in everything Beckett has written. What she overlooks is the fact that in one sense all literature is ultimately autobiography simply because the total contents of any writer's—or any human being's—mind are part of his life-experience. The question which interests the literary critic, however, is precisely the validity of this material as an independent creation existing in its own right.

This is not to say that biography is of no value for the understanding of a writer's *oeuvre*. Far from it: it is one element that has to be taken into account. But the key concept here is "understanding." A biography so insensitive, so wrongly conceived, and written by someone so obviously unfamilar with even the most basic intellectual, cultural and historical background to its subject, cannot approach even the threshold of aesthetic insight.

There remains the dismaying fact that well-known critics, academics, and men of letters have given the book at least half-hearted approval. Reading some of these reviews, I had the impression that the stress was on how "fascinating" a story the book tells: *Se non è vero è ben trovato.* True, perhaps, for spicy anecdotes, juicy gossip. It does not strike me as a particularly valid criterion for a doctoral dissertation loudly claiming to represent "responsible scholarship."

The Detached Anarchist

On Joe Orton—By BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

JOE ORTON WAS BORN and brought up in Leicester, a city whose numbing motto is "*semper eadem*" and whose official history actually boasts of its freedom from "distinctive movements in politics, religion or culture." His wispy, cowed father set up house in a council estate of cramped and sooty monotony, worked as a gardener for the corporation, and was regarded as a failure by himself, his four children and (particularly) his wife, the bitch-goddess Elsie.

It was from his mother that Orton learned his first lessons in hypocrisy, the subject that was to preoccupy him so much later. She presented a raunchy, flamboyant front to the world, preserving a facial dazzle by soaking her false teeth overnight, not in conventional cleanser, but in lavatory bleach; and yet her surviving family's testimony is that she deeply loathed sex, never showed the slightest affection to her husband, and soon after her younger daughter's birth banished him permanently from the marriage bed, explaining that "I had four mistakes: a fifth would be a tragedy." She was also something of a snob. She lived way above her means, conspicuously consumed, and craved the world's approval for her "lovely" children; yet in private she could be crude and cruel, and once knocked her elder daughter unconscious by battering her head against an iron mangle. It was a loveless, deadening house, and one from which the precocious Joe determined to escape at an early age. And so indeed he did, to London, RADA, and 12 years of steadily declining bliss with the man who eventually murdered him, Kenneth Halliwell.

Such upbringings sometimes destroy, often mutilate, and always leave scorchmarks. In the view of John Lahr, as sympathetic, sensitive and

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trenchant a biographer as anyone could wish for,[1] it inflamed Orton. At any rate, "angry" is a word that recurs and recurs when he is analysing his subject's plays. But that may not be everyone's impression either of them or of Orton's character as Mr Lahr disentangles it. To be sure, there is outrage and even grief in the short *Good and Faithful Servant*, which laments the wasted life of an elderly wage-slave not unlike his own browbeaten father. But that is exceptional. The rest of Orton's work does not wear its heart on its sleeve. Indeed, one sometimes wonders if its author wears a heart anywhere. It may be that Leicester and Elsie left Orton not so much with the *saeva indignatio* of the revolutionary as with the hardened nonchalance of the survivor.

CERTAINLY, THE ORTON to whom Mr Lahr introduces us usually sounds more dispassionate than passionate. His letter to his sister on the death of her young son has an offhand brutality about it:

> There's nothing I can write that will make any difference. I know how you must be feeling. Do understand that I would've come home if I'd known, and if there was anything I could've done. . . . I haven't been told when the funeral is and I suppose it's over. I wouldn't send a wreath. I don't begrudge the money, but it seems a lot of show. Nothing can bring the kid back.

His first reaction to the news of his father's fractured skull is "that it won't make any difference to his brain." And he pockets his mother's bleached teeth after her funeral and takes them to London to amuse the cast of *Loot*, a play to which, prophetically enough, they have already contributed a few humorous moments. A character named Hal conceals stolen money in his mother's coffin, in the process stripping the corpse even of its dentures, which he proceeds to "click like castanets" as the conversation brightly turns to the Spanish prostitute he means to import into the brothel he's planning. Later, he hands the teeth over to his undertaker-accomplice, provoking a bystander, himself a tough policeman, to exclaim that "your sense of detachment is terrifying, lad."

ORTON'S DETACHMENT was perhaps a little terrifying, too. He was a charmer, an amusing and engaging companion, but he seems to have developed what Peter Gill, who directed several of his plays, calls a "ruthless self-sufficiency", especially in his sexual relationships. His attachment to Halliwell did not prevent him from being persistently, almost obsessively promiscuous, and he chronicled his casual pick-ups and quick-fire encounters in men's lavatories coolly and amusedly in his diaries: sodomy in a deserted house, a shadowy and sinister saturnalia in a pissoir beneath the Holloway Road, some fumbling and groping with a bank clerk, who then refuses to take Orton home:

> "No," he said, "I don't have the choice of my neighbours, you see. They're down on me and I couldn't take the risk." He nodded to a dwarf skulking in the corner of the lavatory. "He'll suck you off, though. I've seen him do it." He made a motion to the dwarfish creature rather as someone would call a taxi and then, I suppose, went back to his neighbours refreshed.

The scene is quintessential Orton. Had the dampening hand of the Lord Chamberlain not still lain heavily on the theatre of the mid-'60s, such observation would no doubt have become actual Orton. As it is, one of the incidental pleasures of his biography is the frequency with which the people in his life act and talk like the stilted eccentrics of his plays, thus to some extent confirming his claim that they were more realistically portrayed than was commonly recognised. "My vagina has come up the size of a football", his landlady, recovering in hospital after scalding herself, confides to Orton. "The matron told me that in her years of medical experience she'd never seen anything like it. But I've no complaints, I'm being given top-class penicillin." And he eavesdrops, as he habitually did, on bus passengers, this time picking up some quaint banalities about the Daleks. "Very far-fetched", says one woman, "I like something you can believe in." "Yes", replies the other, adding after a pause, "You know where you are with human beings, don't you?" The plays, like the diaries, come from a dedicated peeping Tom: aloof and perhaps a bit callous, always on the watch for the odd, quirky, and faintly perverse, forever gloating over the buttocks flashed behind the net curtains, the worm in the artificial rose.

"CALLOUS" AND "GLOATING" are not, however, words that will appeal to Mr Lahr. They would probably have irritated Orton himself, who claimed that he "developed a mocking, cynical way of treating events because it prevented them from being too painful." Alas, the unbiased critic can only judge experience as it has been transmuted into drama. He cannot simply infer "pain" or "anger" because a playwright claims to feel them or has endured an upbringing that might be likely to provoke them. And what Orton mainly communicates, on the page and on the stage, is an indiscriminate scorn for human institutions and human values, and a scathing, random glee in exposing them as corrupt, hypocritical or both.

The short *Funeral Games*, for instance, defines

[1] *Prick Up Your Ears*. By JOHN LAHR. Allen Lane. £5.50.

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the Christian church as "a bird of prey carrying an olive branch" and attacks religious pretension. The main character, leader of a pious sect called the Brotherhood, is careful to propagate the fact that his very hot-water-bottle is shaped like a cross, and, predictably enough, turns out to be acquisitive, vindictive and violent. At one climactic moment he yells "I'll teach you to strike a man of admitted charity" and attempts to throttle his mortal enemy, himself a defrocked priest who has killed his wife. In *Loot* a Catholic nurse, described as "three parts papal nuncio", is soon revealed as a mass-murderess. And it is she who brings the play to an end with the words "we must keep up appearances", spoken from her knees and over her rosary: by which time she's blackmailed her way to a share of the loot of the title, agreed that the detective investigating the robbery should be given a substantial bribe, and suggested that her innocent and innocuous employer, who has rumbled the conspiracy, should be quietly killed in prison.

To Orton, any form of authority, from the police to the Ministry of Health, was automatically suspect; all totems, all taboos, were to be challenged; and any show of virtue was certain to be sham. In the whole of his *oeuvre* I do not think there is one character with any capacity for altruism or affection. All are actuated by avarice, whether for power, applause, respectability, money, sex, or some concatenation of gain. And this is not a matter for rancour or even regret on Orton's part. On the contrary, he sees it as a plain truth, to be faced, accepted, and then cheerfully shrugged off somewhere between the counting-house and the knocking-shop. "The world", he once said, "is profoundly bad and irresistibly funny."

IT WOULD BE absurdly puritanical to deny that the drama these attitudes produce isn't often, very often, entertaining and even liberating. They produce the exuberance of *The Erpingham Camp*, a modern *Bacchae* in which Orton's Pentheus, the panjandrum of a seaside fun-prison, is punished for his tyrannous hubris by rampaging holidaymakers; and, of course, they produce the engaging scurrilities of *Loot*. Part of Orton's professed purpose in that play was to remind his audiences that a coffin was only a box and a corpse no longer a person; and he fulfils it with invention and dash, dwelling provocatively on details of teeth and eyes and those organs that have to be filleted out before embalming can take place. "My mum's guts were in there", says Hal, explaining why the money can't be stored in a convenient casket. "The damp would get into the notes." That is not just a "sick" joke. Rather, it is a deliberate challenge, a snook pointedly cocked at those who become reverential about death without asking what it is they are revering and why.

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In Mr Lahr's felicitous phrase, Orton liked to "goose" his audiences. He wanted to remind the genteel that they, too, had bowels and genitalia, camouflage them though they might. His was an impish, teasing drama and, in some ways, an impish, teasing character. He actually went to prison for six months for a kind of imaginative vandalism, which consisted of removing books from his local library and remodelling them, so that the blurb to a Dorothy Sayers thriller became a mildly pornographic description of knickers in a police station and John Betjeman's poems flaunted a photo of a scrawny, near-naked man tattooed from neck to toes. After placing these artefacts back on the shelves, he would stand and watch, relishing the dismay of the middle-class browsers. Mr Lahr also tells a less attractive tale of Orton in a Moroccan café, talking in loud and vivid detail about sodomy in order to upset "a rather stuffy American tourist and his disapproving wife." His humour could be bumptious and naughty: it could also be contemptuous and malicious.

THERE IS, OF COURSE, a place for drama that tweaks the upturned noses of the bourgeoisie, breaks open stink-bombs in their rough vicinity, and mischievously reminds the repressed of their carnality. It is a place that Orton fills with such flamboyance that it seems stingy to point out its limitations and pompous to accuse it of being "immature" or "irresponsible" or "not constructive." Such protests have the stamp of the stuffed shirt, successfully pricked. All the same, we are entitled to examine the conception of the good life that emerges from the plays and decide on the extent and degree to which we can share it. For what, to what, does Orton hope to liberate us?

In his utopia there would be no obligation to engage in enervating, anonymous toil, no pressure to disguise or suppress one's natural proclivities, no need to be "respectable." People would no longer be punitively categorised by others. They would no longer be categorised at all. The words "normal" and "abnormal" would fall out of use, as (no doubt) would rigid distinctions between homosexual and heterosexual, male and female. There would be the unalloyed sexual freedom Orton and Halliwell found in North Africa and whose absence in our wintrier climes they constantly lamented. Walking along the prom at Brighton they saw

> numbers of nearly naked young boys. This made me unhappy. After passing a 15-year-old youth lying face downward wearing red bathing drawers, I said in a rage, "England is intolerable. I'd be able to fuck that in an Arab country. I could take him home and stick my cock up him." "This is verbal exhibitionism", Kenneth said, glancing at a number of evil-faced old women in a shelter. "Look at them—crouching like Norns", I said. "I hate this tight-assed civilisation."

My intention in quoting this, let me hasten to say, isn't to fling the modishly emotive accusation, "paedophiliac", at the ghost of Orton. There is nothing in his work to sustain it, except perhaps a flippant reference in *Loot* to a brothel run by three Pakistanis aged between 10 and 15 ("they do it for sweets: stock up with Mars Bars"). But it may indicate just how few he believed the constraints on individual self-indulgence should be, and just how petulant he could become when he was confronted with prohibitions most liberal people would think not unjust.

Mr Lahr describes Orton's philosophy as "anarchic" and "dionysiac", and so perhaps it was. Life, as he saw it, was "cruel, despicable and senseless", and therefore the only wise course was to enjoy what could be enjoyed and escape what couldn't: "provided one spends the time drugged or drunk, the world is a fine place." Nature was never to be resisted, wherever she led, with perhaps the minimal proviso that no one must be too badly injured. Orton's plays celebrate the tripes, the glands and, of course, the genitals. They take delight in the overthrow of reason and the breakdown of order. Virtue in this gaudy, scabrous world is (on the whole) getting what one wants, and vice (on the whole) not getting it. "Pain", in so far as it means anything, is deprivation, and "anger" a justified reaction to those parental powers that presume to deprive others. This can, as I say, prove liberating, even exhilarating, in the theatre. There is also something about its greedy, sticky-fingered hedonism that can only be called infantile.

WHAT WILL POSTERITY make of these contradictions, or, to put the question more manageably, how has Orton's work weathered in the 11 years since his murder? In his iconoclasm, his mistrust of authority, his capacity for mischief and eagerness to shock, he seems very characteristic of the 1960s; and it comes as no sur-

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prise to learn that he was preparing a film-script for the culture-heroes of that callow, roistering decade, the Beatles, at the time he died. Yet he is a rather more original voice than this suggests, too individual to be tidied away into so vague a slot. And *Loot*, his best play, and *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, his next best, proved they still had power to amuse and sting when they were revived at the Royal Court three-odd years ago.

Ronald Bryden nicely calls Orton "the Oscar Wilde of Welfare State gentility", a phrase that helps sum up his more appealing qualities: his enjoyment of subversive aphorism, his considerable formal and technical skills, and perhaps also some of his satiric methods. He is constantly contrasting the outrageous with the mundane, the grotesque with the drab clichés and tatty furbishings of a plastic civilisation. The bacchic revellers in *The Erpingham Camp* rip up the owner's Canvatex Van Gogh and tear down the stand in which the Lady Mayoress is about to watch a "march-past of lovelies." Underneath a ton of "smokeless", which the defrocked priest of *Funeral Games* has bought from the National Coal Board at the reduced summer rate, is the murdered body of his wife. "Do you want to wash your hands before tea?" someone asks another character in the same play; and he obediently lathers not only his own, but the hand he has just lopped off the selfsame corpse. This gruesome object is then packed primly away in a Dundee cake tin.

ORTON'S SATIRIC TECHNIQUES did, however, change somewhat during his short career. In *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, the first and most naturalistic of his full-length plays, the net curtains are kept firmly drawn throughout. Kath and Ed, brother and sister, both have carnal designs on the lodger, Sloane, but they conceal them in euphemism, hiding their greed even from themselves. They have an extraordinary capacity for ignoring or explaining away anything that might contaminate their self-regard: so much so that Sloane can brutally murder their father, Kath and Ed can promptly blackmail him into agreeing to become their sexual slave for six months a year each, and Ed can end the play with a breezy "well, it's been a pleasant morning", without the least consciousness of behaving unusually. But in the later and more farcical *Loot* and *What the Butler Saw* the characters flaunt their proclivities unashamedly. They make conventions look foolish, not by hypocritically affecting an allegiance to them, but by openly, brazenly, ignoring them. "I'm an honest man", says Hal's father when the robbers try to buy his silence. "You'll have to mend your ways, then" is the instant riposte of the policeman on the case. "Your sleep won't be disturbed tonight, dear", someone promises Mrs Prentice, the

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nymphomaniac wife in *What the Butler Saw*. "Life is full of disappointments", she answers.

Orton spent his career looking for equivalents of Wilde's joke about the recently widowed duchess, "her hair has turned quite gold from grief." Perhaps it is not too much to suggest, as Mr Lahr does, that he was searching for "the perfect destructive sentence." Whether he ever found it is questionable; but he did evolve patterns of repartee that succinctly reflected his own brand of cynicism. The method is apparent in embryo at the end of his first play, *The Ruffian on the Stair*: one character kills another, incidentally smashing a goldfish bowl with a stray bullet, and the murderer's wife bursts into tears and wails, "They're dead, poor things—and I reared them so carefully." It is, roughly, to cap an event or statement that would seem to expect a strongly emotional response, whether of outrage, horror or anything else, with one that wildly underreacts to that event or statement.

Thus Mrs Prentice reports that a pageboy has tried and failed to rape her. "The service in these hotels is dreadful" is the reply. Later she whimsically threatens to fly to Delhi and seduce its student population. "You can't take lovers in Asia", flings back her "aghast" husband, "The air fare would be crippling." "A woman doesn't like facing the fact that the man she lives with is insane", she remarks when the possibility of committing him is mooted. Why not? "It makes her feel such a fool." "Try not to break his arms or legs", she tells the young man who has been told to prepare him for the padded cell. Again, why not? "It makes the job of adjusting the straitjacket doubly difficult." Line after line begins by suggesting that values may exist, and line after line ends by asserting that they don't.

THESE EXAMPLES all come from *What the Butler Saw*, which Mr Lahr is inclined to think the funniest, as well as the finest, of Orton's plays. Having seen it twice, and twice failed to laugh even remotely as much as the swaggering language and frenetic encounters seemed to demand, I find it difficult to agree. Part of the reason, I suspect, is that its increasingly elaborate subterfuges and disguises have no inevitability or even necessity. Why, for instance, should the wretched Prentice be at pains to conceal a minor indiscretion from a wife who herself tends to sexual athleticism? How can we laugh at someone's flouting of convention, or desperate attempts to regain respectability, when no one on stage is particularly conventional, respectable or shockable? Farce simply can't breathe in an atmosphere of amorality and permissiveness. And part of the reason is that the proceedings become increasingly unreal as the

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evening hurtles forward. Fantasy is not friendly to farce, either.

But it is its fantastic, indeed nightmarish, quality that gives *What the Butler Saw* special interest to a student of Orton. It is as if we were being treated to a tour of his free-associating subconscious. The setting is an asylum that is being visited by an inspector-general who sees the most innocent action as a symptom of profound lunacy and, consequently, an excuse to certify the perpetrator. By the hectic, frenzied dénouement it is hard to distinguish who is sane and who insane and, as much to the point, who is male and who female. A drugged policeman meanders about in a leopard-skin dress; a girl reels across in the pageboy's uniform; the government inspector and Mrs Prentice draw revolvers and start shooting.

At this point the stage directions become surprisingly extreme. People are "screaming with terror", "white with shock", and "anguished, fainting"; a wound "streams with blood", and blood "pours" down someone else's leg. Suddenly, unexpectedly and, for him, uniquely, Orton seems to be visualising a human abattoir, which even he finds less than hilarious. Before the final curtain the mood has changed again. Orton, who once declared that his work was "a deliberate parody of bad theatre", is reconciling everyone with everyone else in a burlesque imitation of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Yet the violence that has preceded this is too graphic to be altogether forgotten. It is as if Orton, right at the end of his writing career, realised that the anarchy he was apt to celebrate could result in pain and that pain actually hurt.

It was a strangely ominous insight. Before he had revised *The Butler*, his skull had been smashed open by Halliwell, by now demented with envy and sexual jealousy: and we shall never know to what extent, or even whether, that odd, flawed play betokened some deepening of his talent. As it is, we are left with a tantalising, maddening blend of the wit, the *agent provocateur* and the child hoodlum: enough to keep critical discussion and disagreement on the bubble for a long time.

Fascination of What's Difficult

Recent Poetry—By ALAN BROWNJOHN

ONE SENSES THAT the old hubbub about "the difficulty" of modern verse may be dying down a bit. Poets have, of course, come out into public and talked more—talked patiently in many instances—in recent years: a by-product of all those poetry readings in pubs and clubs and schools and colleges, all the residential courses on which writers and would-be writers can meet on close terms. But there is also a growing acceptance, after much weary reiteration and labouring, of what was surely a fairly obvious point: that some degree of effort was *always* needed before the best poetry yielded itself to the understanding. Readers could quite reasonably be asked to wean themselves from the expectation of familiar rhymes and rhythms, and sound old-fashioned sentiments (see Kingsley Amis's *Faber Popular Reciter*, *passim*, to understand how an implication that anything "difficult" or "sensitive" or "demanding" was not "poetry" could be built into the educational system by school anthologies). The pleasure principle was not only represented by the willingness to lay down hard cash for popular verse, but also by a readiness to meet good and "difficult" verse on its own terms; and postpone the gratification, if need be, until after three or four patient readings.

And of course, there were ways around the principal objections to "difficulty." If it was a matter of a difficult vocabulary, then it was always possible to use a dictionary and decide whether the unknown words were a necessity, in the context, or an affectation (take your choice with the lexical late Auden: "Where infrequent shepherds,/Sloomy of face,/Snudge of spirit,/Snoachy of speech,/With scaddle dogs/Tend a few scrawny/Cag-mag sheep.") If it was a case of private references in verse, it was quite allowable to require them to possess a broader validity, since the same thing doesn't have to happen in the same form and in the same place to poet and reader for the reader to grasp the nature of the experience: thus no one need feel left out on hearing that Eliot's "La Figlia Che Piange" was about a grave-monument which the poet failed to find in 1911; though one *can* be suspicious if private references are apparently being used to conceal something. Then again, if the difficulty was outright obscurity of meaning, or density of texture, it wasn't unfair to point out problematical passages in the poetry of the past, and advise readers to battle on resolutely as long as their instincts told them they were on to something interesting. Dullness was the worst (and most frequent) sin; and to be teased by William Empson's "The Teasers" was more pleasurable than to be sent to sleep by something comprehensible and flat.

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GRADUALLY, THEN, the legs of the "difficulty" argument have been worn away. But where long effort is required in order to arrive at even the bare outlines of a meaning, the obligation to demonstrate something sensuous in the poetry, something passionate, something above all worth pursuing for its sheer interest, becomes very important. It would be depressing if the work of Geoffrey Hill, who is unquestionably one of the best poets we have, remained the preserve of specialised criticism, however tenacious and revealing. This poetry *does* grip the attention, *does* appeal on a sensuous level, *does* reward the reader who is not dismayed by still not understanding after many readings.

Taking what is conceivably the "simplest" poem in *Tenebrae*,[1] his new volume, "Florentines" has only five lines, and runs as follows:

Horses, black-lidded mouths peeled back
to white: well-groomed these warriors ride,
their feuds forgotten, remembered, forgotten . . .
a cavalcade passing, night not far-off;
the stricken faces damnable and serene.

Starting (one might reasonably guess) from images of soldiers in a painting—the menace of the bared teeth of their horses caught his eye—Hill goes on to characterise not only the Florentine warriors in the picture but *all* immaculate and mercenary brutality riding towards the darkness of its own spiritual damnation. "Damnable", with its force on at least two levels (the men are damnable in themselves, and they may *be* damned), exemplifies Hill's astonishing capacity to contain within one word a variety of meanings which enlarge the range of a whole passage or even a whole poem. And in the other sense of *that* word, most of his poems are acts of containment: they grasp, and hold within themselves, huge themes which most poets could never cram into the kind of framework Hill chooses; they control them without reducing their power. At the same time, the tight structures which contain these subjects (including love sacred and profane, the persistence of history, the Jewish holocaust) tantalisingly seal them off.

HOW THEN TO GET AT, obtain access to, the statements Hill is making in a volume like *Tenebrae*—which is probably less accessible, even, than any of his three previous books? One way to start is by forgetting, for the moment, the less helpful titles, the epigraphs and the notes, and going straight to the places where his forbidding power and eloquence immediately grip the attention. The thirteen-sonnet sequence called "An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England" is the heart of the book, but it's less about Christianity, or architecture, than about a certain distilled essence of Englishness, defined in different settings and times: "Platonic England" as Coleridge felt it:

Platonic England, house of solitudes,
rests in its laurels and its injured stone,
replete with complex fortunes that are gone,
beset by dynasties of moods and clouds.

It stands, as though at ease with its own world,
the mannerly extortions, languid praise,
all that devotion long since bought and sold
"The Laurel Axe"

On careful reading, a kind of ground plan of "Platonic England" unveils itself (like King Offa's Mercia in *Mercian Hymns*) in the imagery of the poems, even when its physical presence is lost under the ruins of the new estate, or locked in photo-albums, or crumbled into "disfigured shrines." Inside the series, and giving no particular problems of interpretation, are embedded a beautiful "Cavalier" lyric, "Damon's Lament for his Clorinda" in the bleak year of 1654 ("No sooner has the sun/swung clear above earth's rim than it is gone./We live like gleaners of its vestiges"); and a three-sonnet sequence called "A Short History of British India", which provides just that: from the time when "the rutting cannon" broke down forts and palaces (that one sexual image would have provided a whole poem for a lesser poet) to an age when all has gone, and only names remain:

Gone the ascetic pastimes, the Persian
scholarship, the wild boar run to ground,
the watercolours of the sun and wind.
Names rise like outcrops on the rich terrain,

like carapaces of the Mughal tombs
"A Short History of British India, III"

This entire sequence is an amazingly rich and complex achievement. I find it more satisfying and rewarding than the pared-down and elegant "Pentecost Castle"; fine as its lucid effects are, they depend for their weight of meaning on a gravity and intricacy reflected from Hill's other work. Christopher Ricks has linked Hill with George Herbert; he is closer to Donne and Crashaw in his "Lachrimae" poems, though would even Crashaw have dreamt of Christ turning aside even from the *attitudinising* postures of crucifixion?

frightened of hell, not knowing where to turn,

I fall between harsh grace and hurtful scorn.
You are the crucified who crucifies,
self-withdrawn, even from your own device,
your trim-plugged body, wreath of rakish thorn.
"Lachrimae Coactae"

In *Tenebrae*, once again, Geoffrey Hill gives us a poetry that will only be fully explained by someone's closest attention and research. But it isn't

[1] *Tenebrae*. By GEOFFREY HILL. André Deutsch, £2.50.

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necessary to read either long or laboriously to sense the impressiveness of a genuine and brilliant extension of a whole modern metaphysical tradition.

ROY FISHER'S *Collected Poems* of 1969 made the best case I had seen for an English experimental poetry which drew something usable and interesting out of the work of the American *avant-garde*; his weirdly and delicately observed landscapes of urban desolation offered a slant on things which no one else was providing—at least not with the same wry wit and humanity. *Matrix*, in 1971, was slightly disappointing; and his new volume, *The Thing About Joe Sullivan*,[2] still finds him in rather uncertain form. The "difficulty" in these poems is that kind of opacity which results when every image is granted its own individual life and the poet feels inhibited from pulling them together into lumps of paraphrasable material. In "107 Poems" he has opted out, and thrown that number of images together into a lively but distinctly pointless heap of iambics. In "In the Wall", which is a virtuoso poem in its own way, carefully and even elegantly crafted, a meaning is groping about somewhere, but it refuses to come clean:

A scent with no face
in darkness:

sallow beyond the skin
and through to a lily-of-the-valley odour
sallow satin

lifted in the voice

not looking but breathing fast
shifting little and quick
more sensible than sense allows;

a raid into the unalterable.

That these evasions indicate an inhibition as much as a policy is suggested by the way he suspects that images might just turn arbitrary and meaningless:

I can
compare what I like to the salts . . .

The salts I can compare
to anything there is.
Anything.

"The Only Image"

But the thing about Roy Fisher is that his best poems blend highly unusual observations and insights with a subtle control which stops *very* far short of banal plotting or artifice. In this book, poems like "At Once", "On the Open Side" and (in satirical vein) "Artists, Providers, Places to Go" show his bizarre and attractive imagination working to excellent effect. There is a lot in them, as he says of the jazz pianist Joe Sullivan in the title-poem, of

the rapid and perverse
tracks that ordinary feelings

make when they get driven
hard enough against time.

THAT STRICT FORMS remain a challenge, and even a positive attraction, is amply clear in Geoffrey Hill, in *One Another*, the new sonnet sequence by Peter Dale,[3] in Tony Harrison's set of "Meredithian" sonnets in *The School of Eloquence*[4]—even in Roy Fisher's 107 pentameters. Despite a real care to vary, and enliven, the sonnet form—different rhyme-patterns, ingenious shapes on the page, a shunning of obvious rhythms—Dale's poems seem destined to pull back into conventionality, the perennial snare of the sonnet form. *One Another* is unusually touching and honest; yet the muted tones of these poems of married love combine with the insistent structure to make the exercise seem all too discreet and unobtrusive. This is not true of Tony Harrison's new volume, but then his Meredithian

[2] *The Thing About Joe Sullivan*. By ROY FISHER. Carcanet, £2.50.

[3] *One Another*. by PETER DALE. Agenda/Carcanet. £6, paper £2.

[4] *The School of Eloquence*. By TONY HARRISON. Rex Collings, £5.

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JOHN MURRAY

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sixteen-liners are like his formal verse in earlier volumes: hammered into crude containers for heavy irony and his very own brand of chip-on-the-shoulder coarseness.

The School of Eloquence is a work-in-progress on the theme of society, class and language, an area not neglected by dramatists and novelists during the last twenty years, yet only glancingly touched by the poets. Harrison mostly stands glaring ruefully over the great divide which a classical education and a literary career has opened up between him and his working-class family; a position in which he finds it so easy to be cruel, and touchy, very difficult to be tender, and at times quite possible to be patronising. "Them & [uz]", a pair of sonnets about "Received Pronunciation", he dedicates jointly to Professors Richard Hoggart and Leon Cortez. Hoggart's writings on working-class culture and upward mobility are now probably more famous than the music-hall Shakespeare send-ups of his fellow "professor"—but the point here is that Cortez' outrageous act presupposed a basic knowledge of Shakespeare in his working-class audience. The class you leave behind doesn't automatically subside into pathos and ignorance. When he manages to drop the combative poses, he can produce a beautifully-modulated love poem like "Durham"; and write a sonnet called "Book Ends" which might easily command tears.

TED WALKER'S new collection, *Burning the Ivy*,[5] confirms his reputation rather than advancing it. What is by now a very familiar kind of animal poem (and Walker did a lot to make it familiar)—the one about the creature intensely observed when it suddenly intrudes on our over-civilised consciousness—gets shuffled towards the back of the book, where it is still very much alive in "Vipers" and "Wild bird in a living-room", and keeps company with a whole zodiac of others. Carefully crafted notations of domestic existence, of change, and mortality come forward, and most of them (including the poem providing the title) are honourably done, but solid instead of exciting.

I react in the same way to Stewart Conn's *Under the Ice*,[6] though Walker is not so diurnal as to make his charwoman "as near a Muse as one is likely to find." Poems which rely on the bare facts of ordinary living really do need, now, to find something fresher and larger to say about it, preferably without portentousness. Conn's "Bonfire", with the respectable householder-poet realising his girl neighbour must be "on the game" comes a little nearer; and his "Afternoon Visit", mediating between frail grandmother and fidgeting child while wrestling proceeds on the box, succeeds:

The child slips lightly to the floor

And plays there. Her eyes mist
Over. I concentrate on the faded green
Of an apron. What will become of us, at the last?
Men fight through blizzards, on the tv screen.

Both books, with poems about the seasons and the garden, about moving house and cultivating a fitful muse are likeable, and each has an engaging poem, unlike the rest, which promises something different if the writer follows it up: Walker's nicely ornate sonnet about Oscar Wilde at Littlehampton, and Conn's weird little account of a pretended suicide on the Govan ferry. But experience, and hard graft, tell in Walker's favour with "Christmas Apples", where some vivid and scary feelings refuse to be covered up by small rituals.

IN THE FABER *Poetry Introduction 3*, John Cassidy had a strikingly nasty poem of a kind one remembers with reluctance—yet still remembers. It was about the bloody slaughter of farm starlings with a tennis racket, and it now gives a title to Cassidy's welcome and distinctly promising

[5] *Burning the Ivy*. By TED WALKER. Cape, £1.75.
[6] *Under the Ice*. By STEWART CONN. Hutchinson, £3.25.
[7] *An Attitude of Mind*. By JOHN CASSIDY. Hutchinson, £3.25.

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NADINE GORDIMER

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Nadine Gordimer, a South African, is acknowledged as one of the finest living English novelists. In this critique Michael Wade concentrates on the problems of cultural identity reflected in her work – the tensions between metropolitan values, based on British and European standards, and the South African realities.

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first collection. No age is quoted, but biographical data and the tone of his poems suggest that he may be closer to the generation of the post-Ted Hughes nature poets (Ted Walker and Stewart Conn included) than to that of New Fantasticals like Craig Raine and Christopher Reid. *An Attitude of Mind*[7] shows, with poems like "Quince" and "The Bulb Field", a concern to get things descriptively right, and understood, without artifice or elaboration. I think he is still doing it too lengthily; and a piece like "Fishing Langton Pond" needs to be more riveting than it is to make up for his not catching anything. But "Frozen Canal" concentrates his mind a bit more effectively:

a heavy drumming in the frosted air
Brings the butting shoulders of the ice-breaker,

The spoil-sport barge labouring to thump and crack
Leaving brick-sized ice-blocks jumbled in its wake.

Deliberate this. Under unreflecting ice
The sepia water waits for a shocked face

To splinter and blunder in

And "Aubade", with its eerie evocation of early morning blues ("An owl on a lamp-post swivelled/Its big disc face . . ./A bus rumbled/And hissed under its perch, but ruffled no feather") may conceivably have influenced a poem of Philip Larkin's with the same title, which it must have preceded? Some thinning down and thinning out of poems could be done; but *An Attitude of Mind* shows a confident talent getting steadily under way.

LESS SPACE than they deserve for some well-established names: Jon Stallworthy's *A Familiar Tree*[8] provides the story of missionary ancestors in the South Seas and New Zealand in a series of ingeniously-fashioned "found" poems, mainly in the form of letters and journals. It's neatly—too neatly—done, with not enough rough edges to seem altogether right: Berryman's "Anne Bradstreet" and Charles Olson's "Maximus" have been this way before, to greater effect. Still the most moving poem is "The Almond Tree", reprinted here from *Root and Branch*, Stallworthy's 1969 volume.

Jenny Joseph's poems work very much against the rules: they seem too rambling and untidy, too clumsily contemptuous of form to make an impression—but they *do*, with a tetchy, insistent voice that scratches an odd sort of lyricism out of the detritus of urban living. In *The Thinking Heart*,[9] the ones in the sequence "Life and Turgid Times of A. Citizen" are best: shortest, most concentrated, the eye not roving so randomly away from the object.

Geoffrey Grigson's *The Fiesta*[10] is really a notebook collection; continually interesting for details picked up on the way, in Spain, Germany, Greece but not this time turning them into achieved poems. Except, as in "Return" and "In the Ford", where something genuinely and personally felt dovetails into the landscape with an ease and subtlety characteristic of Grigson at his best.

[8] *A Familiar Tree*. By JON STALLWORTHY. Chatto/Oxford, £2.75.
[9] *The Thinking Heart*. By JENNY JOSEPH. Secker & Warburg, £2.90.
[10] *The Fiesta*. By GEOFFREY GRIGSON. Secker & Warburg, £3.50.

Mishan Accomplished

Of Growth & Goodness—By WILLIAM LETWIN

THIS technically accomplished critique of economic growth, presented in urbane and entirely non-technical style, written with pleasant wit, as well as prophetic fervour, maintains the old and apparently familiar proposition that wealth does not make people happy. But seen against its immediate background, Mishan's position, that "further pursuit of economic growth is inimical to the good life we aspire to", is novel; for the concerted preoccupation with economic growth and economic development since 1946 has assumed that raising people's incomes would solve the world's problems (at least its worst problems), would make people happy, or would in any event lay the economic foundations for the good life. One of the early signs that this dominant faith was beginning to crumble was the publication in 1967 of Mishan's *Costs of Economic Growth*. He has since maintained his attack by a prolific flow of articles, in ENCOUNTER as elsewhere, and he now produces this present comprehensive indictment of economic growth.[1]

[1] *The Economic Growth Debate: An Assessment*. By E. J. MISHAN. George Allen & Unwin, £7.50.

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Many people have been prepared by the prevalent drift of debate during the past decade to find his essential picture persuasive. There is already, says Mishan, enough total income in any "advanced" country for any reasonable purpose, and there are already quite enough people. Let us concentrate, he urges, on making the best use of our present productive capacity, for we could live much better than we do, morally and aesthetically. What we could hope for is to waste less on spurious goods—on passive and shoddy entertainment via television, immersion in the trivial passing facts recorded by newspapers, medical attention superfluous if not inimical to health, defence and police services needed partly to control aggressions stimulated by economic growth itself, excessive use of noisy cars, over-rich food and harmful drugs. By curbing such waste, we could afford to spend more on the activities and the leisure that make up a life of quiet contentment, marked by love and trust, self-esteem, rectitude, and the like. Such is Mishan's vision.

Yet, pungent as are Mishan's descriptions of present maladies and enticing as are his portrayals of a good life, his line of argument fails at various points to convince.

For instance, granted that the total income of a rich nation may in many respects be quite large enough, nevertheless some inhabitants are more or less poor. Mishan believes this could be dealt with fairly easily, that all the "hard-core poverty" in the United States, for instance, could be eliminated by redistribution on quite a modest scale; but he believes that such redistribution is blocked by the "self-seeking ethos" which stimulates and which is in turn reinforced by economic growth. Some of the evidence suggests the contrary. Quite a good deal of redistribution does in fact go on in the United States, and far more in Britain, which suggests that the prevailing ethos is far less "self-seeking" than he believes. And many who oppose redistribution, or at least increases in redistribution, do so not because they are "selfish" but because they believe that quite a few beneficiaries of redistribution are "layabouts" and "parasites." Among economists, some oppose increased redistribution on the view that it tends to depress the growth of real national income, and believe that the best cure for poverty (in the absolute sense, which is the only sense that merits moral sympathy) is economic growth, which tends to lift the incomes of the poor as well as of everyone else.

Again, there is room to doubt Mishan's proposition that there are already quite enough people on the earth. Although, like many others, I share his discomfort at the thought that a billion more people, or a few billions, may crowd in beside us by the year 2000, I cannot accept that economic growth is the culprit. Population has been growing faster, since World War II, in economically backward countries than in the industrialised West. It is quite plausible that as real incomes and economic security increase, the poor of Asia, Africa and South America will decide that they no longer need so many children to support them in old age, will learn how to control birth, and will come around to the European persuasion that a small well-tended family is better than a numerous hungry family. But if not, what could we or should we do about population growth? We can urge people to restrict themselves to two children per couple, for the sake of everyone else; but will that persuade parents whose desire for children is deep and intense? Are we prepared to stop them by force? Besides, since long-range demographic projections are notoriously unreliable, it may be that the expected billions will never appear. Or they may come on to the scene in the next century, by which time equipment will be available to transport them painlessly to the Moon, where they will erect yet another brave new world, free of pollution and so underpopulated that those extra-terrestrial colonists, like their predecessors in North America, will warmly welcome newcomers.

CONSIDER, once again, Mishan's animadversions on television. There is certainly something repulsive in the thought that children and whole families spend six hours every day sitting physically still and emotionally agitated, watching people who talk at them but to whom they cannot talk in return. At worst it is terrible, at least trivial; why, then, do they do it? Mishan tends to attribute this—like many other aspects of vice and evil—to economic growth. But that explanation is unconvincing. Certainly people could not watch television if they could not afford to buy a set, so it is true that widespread high incomes—occasioned by economic growth—explain common access to this instrument of vice. But it does not explain why people deploy their ample resources in that direction rather than towards the good life as Mishan and others define it.

Plenty is the testing-ground of civilisation. A

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poverty-stricken peasant may live a morally commendable life, marked by regular rhythms, hard work, and frugality—because departure from that line leads directly to starvation. So poor peasants must behave, though we have ample testimony from Tolstoy and others that many peasants embraced disaster by laziness, drunkenness, and self-destructivé greed. When, however, people are freed by plenty from the confining influence of necessity, their capacity to live the good life really comes into play. And then—that is, now—we see (as everyone should have known all along) that most people have a great capacity for doing things that are ugly, stupid, and sinful. Economic growth has disclosed a little more fully men's talent for acting badly as well as nobly; it does not cause or even explain vice. And that means that stopping economic growth will not cure vice. Teaching and exhortation, in all their various forms, may have helped in the past and may continue to help in the future; they are, in any event, all that we can trust in; all save for a dictatorship of the virtuous, which unfortunately opens the way for dictatorship by the worst rather than the best. Mishan in no way favours such a dictatorship; he relies instead on moral exhortation and it would be a public benefit if his wide-ranging, delicate and attractive work of persuasion came to the attention of those whose optimism about the benefits of economic growth is untinged by misgivings about its side-effects.

An ironic footnote to this book is that it has been written in the United Kingdom, where economic growth has recently been going on more slowly than in almost any other industrialised country. A long and furious debate has been taking place over why this is so. One explanation, obviously only part of the immensely complicated truth, is that the British—labourers and managers alike—do not like to work. This fact, if fact it is, may be interpreted as culpable laziness; or as a customary response, no longer justified, to the wealth which Britain once possessed but possesses no longer; or as the emergence of a new and higher civilisation (cf. the thesis of Bernard Nossiter's new book on Britain), in which men value work only as a means to as much income as enables them to live a life of cultivated and self-fulfilling leisure—in which, in short, men, liberated finally from material need, enter at last into their heritage of freedom. If this last dream-like interpretation were in any sense justified, it would mean that the ultimate remedy for economic growth is economic growth, that economic growth is in effect a self-limiting disease, which leaves the patient at last in a better state of health than when he first succumbed. That is rather too much to hope for; but it is not impossible that many or most people should decide eventually that endless increase in income is not really worth the cost, for many people already make that decision at some point or other in their own lives.

It may not be long before we need to consider what problems are even more fundamental and durable than those thrown up, as Mishan subtly analyses them, by economic growth.

In a Suburban Museum

They have withdrawn the exhibit with two left feet,
A scowling Anglo-Saxon not feeling quite himself.
His pins were his only present claim to fame
And they have been taken from under him. This man
Is used to waiting, though; in time he may be dusted
And labelled, *Early Victim of a Bureaucratic Muddle.*

The irreverent *lof* we visit on you is only worse
If you were a man not to tangle with—a harpist,
An athlete or weaver with a price on your limbs.
Take these words as wergild, as I take yours.
Hoarse and passionate, echoing still and always
In time's chamber, and love you for them: *Bone to bone,*
Blood to blood, limb to limb, thus they are fitted together.
Wherever you are now, *freond*, put your best foot forward.

Kevin Crossley-Holland

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POINTS OF THE COMPASS

Talking to South Africans

By Laurence Lerner

GERTIE EXPLAINED to me that she wasn't very keen on visitors coming out from England. "We do not altogether trust you", she said. "You come here and say that the Africans are happy, that they wear shirts and trousers, not blankets. You say that you haven't seen anyone shot in the streets while you were here. You say, look how much press freedom there is in South Africa." In fact we had both of us just listened to a South African newspaperman, a respected progressive, saying "in sorrow" that there was more press freedom in South Africa than in any other African country; and Gertie had not liked him saying it, feeling the comparison to be unfair, but had not succeeded in persuading him that it wasn't true.

Gertie was a middle-aged African woman, now trying to take a correspondence degree. She had been politicised by her children, I later heard, several of whom had gone into exile, and one of whom had died there. She was the only person I met, in six weeks, who told me that I shouldn't have come. (But that may mean little: staunch believers in total boycott probably wouldn't have got themselves in a position to speak to me.) She was in favour of all that the young blacks had done in the 1976 revolution, including burning down schools. To the suggestion that it would be more logical to burn down the police stations she reacted with angry contempt: "How do you get to the police station, past all the guns?" I asked if she wanted the schools rebuilt.

LAURENCE LERNER *was born and grew up in Cape Town, and came to England at the age of 21. He is now Professor of English Literature at the University of Sussex. The return visit he writes about (real people, fictitious names) was made in 1978.*

Among his various contributions to ENCOUNTER *are "The Prodigal Philistine" (February 1978), "The Triumph of Scylla" (August 1977), and "Realists and Formalists" (July 1977).*

"It doesn't matter", she said. "You don't think they're *our* schools, do you?"

"Don't you want your children to learn to read?" I asked.

"They'll learn", she said, "somehow or other. We'll have street schools, if we need to."

That evening, pondering what Gertie had said, I met Alice. She was baby-sitting for the friends I was staying with; Alice is coloured, Muslim, and also middle-aged. She had had nine children, eight of them living. She acted as companion and did "general work" for two retired doctors—both called Cohen, one of them bed-ridden.

"He said to me—Come over to the bed Alice so I can bless you—you have made my day—I can bless you because I'm a Cohen, it's like being a rabbi." Why had he said that? "Because I made him laugh. He said, no one has made me laugh like this for ages. So he blessed me. I can count myself really lucky, because I work for two Cohens."

I asked her if she'd had a hard life. "You know, we didn't realise how hard it was, only now when it's got a bit easier, the children all grown up, four of them married, only now we can realise we never had time to stop and think about it." None of her children would have nine babies. "You know, nowadays people are so clever, they can decide when to have children, we never knew anything about that." So all hers will only have one or two, but they are so close they're all growing up together like one family. Alice has just had a hysterectomy (was it Dr Cohen who taught her the word?), and as thanksgiving for her recovery she intends to go and help in an orphanage.

Two women. Both have lost a child. Both have worked hard all their lives, mainly for others. Both were friendly, both (it was clear) better people than me. We all know that some people are politically conscious, some aren't; and the arguments will not cease to rage, on which is the right way to be. Meeting them both in one day was realising how deep the difference is, how impossible to say one is right, one wrong.

MY FRIEND STEPHEN is (there is no other word) a gentleman. He is a professor at one of the white universities, but that only describes what he does. What he is: a gentleman. He is very brilliant, as it happens, one of the most distinguished men in his subject in South Africa, and also shy—but he hides this under his perfect courtesy. I am sure he never raises his voice. His wife is an expert on porcelain. Their house is beautifully furnished; the books strike a perfect balance between scholarship and bibliophilia. He is delighted that I am visiting his university, and speaking to his students; when he introduces me, he is laudatory but not fulsome, grateful but not deferential. When I have dinner at his house, the occasion is relaxed, friendly and

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tasteful. We never actually see the servant, we just hear the silvery tinkling of the dinner bell. He is interested in what I am writing, modest about his own work (he has no need to be modest).

And there he is, sitting on a volcano. Hundreds of thousands of Africans regard him as part of the system that oppresses them. He is a kindly man, he oppresses nobody. He represents civilisation. He (or others) may be there in two generations time, civilising white and black alike. Or he may be swept aside when the volcano erupts. If he is, people will say that the culture he represented was, in such a situation, essentially frivolous. They will say it, and they will feel that facts have proved them right.

MY DOCTOR FRIEND has a son in the army, who came home on leave while I was staying there. Eight weeks of basic training, and now the question arises whether he is going to be sent to the border (no one is quite sure how much fighting is going on, how many people are being killed), or whether he will succeed in getting into one of the specialised units. He is not sure himself what he really wants. His friends are students, or in the theatre world; they hold liberal views; some of them have been on the edge of trouble with the police, some of them have non-white friends. For young Henry, the army was a shattering experience. Never to be called anything but "*jood*" (is it anti-Semitism, or just banter?); submitting to the indignity of verbal and physical abuse, the pettiness of the NCOs who come in to the hut ten minutes before inspection, throw a bucket of dirty water on the floor, and give them ten minutes to make everything spotless. Inspection is such a nightmare that they leave their beds made and sleep on the floor. Henry's hatred for his masochistic, nasty-minded corporal is frighteningly intense, yet he laughs as he tells us of it: "If I could watch his toenails being pulled out, it would give me only pleasure." He knows this is no way to talk, in his circle. He hates the army because it has done that to him.

Yet while he has been crawling through thornbushes, his parents have been living comfortably in their Cape Town suburb. He wants them to know that he is protecting their life in white South Africa for them. They can live in such comfort because of his degradation. He may be opposed to everything his government does, but he has come to realise it is his government—he feels he has come to realise it in a way his parents haven't. "If we want to keep the Russians and the Cubans out, someone has to be prepared to fight them. . . ." He is, after all, South African, and he doesn't want any Cubans in; as he develops this point he explains that the fighting on the border is tough ("We're not allowed to use 'after-shave' on the border, not even soap, those Africans can smell you for miles!"), that even the brutalities of basic training have some point after all. He begins to contradict all he has previously said about the pointless sadism of what they have to do. He does not notice the contradictions.

As it happens, Henry has an uncle who is a member of the African National Congress, and had to go into political exile. He has met the uncle in London, and they get on very well. It has become a family joke that the two of them will meet and have to shoot each other. Henry insists that he'll drop his gun, and say "Uncle Reggie, how are you?" The thought of actually fighting is still unreal. If Henry does go to the border, will he eventually come home a good white South African, and tell his former friends how naive their radical opinions are?

ALL EXCEPT ONE of the South African prime ministers have been Stellenbosch graduates. It is the most famous, and the most distinguished, of the Afrikaans medium universities, and not altogether trusted by the others. Its student body does not belong to the right-wing *Afrikaanse Studentebond*, but tries to steer an independent line between that and the left-wing NUSAS of the English-speaking universities. Visiting Stellenbosch, I announce that I want to meet some Afrikaans professors, and my friends are very helpful about this. In particular, I meet Willem.

Willem is a dissident. He is against apartheid, against censorship, against dogmatism. He has had trouble with the university authorities, and has ended by forming a small department of his own where he is a less obvious thorn in conservative flesh. He is a devout Christian, and believes the Christian message is one of brotherhood, justice, and racial cooperation. But he is not like the English-speaking radicals and progressives I have met, for he is an Afrikaner to the backbone. (His English, of course, is perfect: all Afrikaans intellectuals speak perfect English, but the reverse is not true.) He is a violent opponent of the government, but he refuses to be a pessimist.

"My people will learn, they will have to be flexible, simply in order to survive."

Will they learn it in time, I ask, and Willem admits wryly that they may not. But if they do learn, it will not be the opposition Progressives who will teach them, for a party made up of English-speakers only is doomed to permanent opposition in a white franchise. Only Willem and his friends can teach them.

I point out to Willem that he is untypical, and I want to meet a more representative Professor, if possible one of the famous *verkramptes*. So he introduces me to Professor Van Rooyen (I dare not address him, or even think of him, by his Christian name), a recently retired theologian. Willem prudently leaves us alone, after mentioning that Van Rooyen is looking forward to the chance of putting his case to me. This turns out to be true. He

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is delighted to have a visitor from England. (Van Rooyen is the one man I meet to whom I do not confess that I was born in South Africa.) He explains the government's policy lucidly and politely. It is all based on stewardship. The whites see themselves as responsible for helping the blacks to take their place as a civilised people, but they have a long way to go. It is not possible to move too quickly, Van Rooyen explains, because the government has its own rural voters to think of. If too much money, raised by taxing the whites, is diverted to educating the blacks, there will be protests. I query the term "diverted": what are taxes for, if not to set up schools for the poor as well as the rich? But he insists on the term, for his position is based on the premise that South Africa is not one nation but many. He does not object to Africans acquiring political power (slowly) and ruling their own affairs (though he is not very realistic about the dependence of white South Africa's economy on black labour). But he cannot tolerate the thought of Africans exercising political power over whites. "Separate development", yes (and the term is now more popular than *apartheid*); but integration, never.

In fact, I spend far more time talking to Van Rooyen about theology than about politics. His political opinions are, after all, more or less predictable (though it is an interesting change to have them put in such a relaxed atmosphere by an Afrikaner); yet the chance to meet a real 17th-century Calvinist is one I do not feel I can miss. He sets forth his theological views with care and logic: there is no shoddy thinking there. But when he comes against a real problem, he explains that God's ways are supra-logical (he is interesting on the question, for instance, of whether predestination is simply arbitrary: the reprobate are not just damned at the end through God's whim, they lead the life of the damned all through). I ask how we are to distinguish the supra-logical (which he approves) from the merely illogical (which he castigates); and he replies by discussing the nature of God: there is nothing in His nature that is *against* logic. I find this a very neat dodge. I ask too why God has made it so easy for an Afrikaner to be saved (with the true church on his doorstep), and so hard for, say, a Russian. His reply shows that on a personal level he is a genuinely humble man: no individual must be sure of his salvation. But in general terms he has no difficulty in accepting the idea of the chosen people; the Afrikaners are not, after all, the first people to be chosen.

As I leave he shows me, with some pride, the task that keeps him busy during retirement: he is compiling a daybook of passages from Calvin, a page of text (mostly from the *Institutes*, occasionally from the letters) for each day. That is the gift he hopes to leave to his people. It's not easy, he explains, to translate Calvin's Latin into Afrikaans, but he's done 220.

"I suppose you're going to do 365", I say, feeling the remark to be banal in the extreme. But it isn't, for he answers with just a shade of reproof, "Three hundred and sixty-*six*."

TWO PEOPLE WHO LIVE in Soweto. Both are elderly, both are (or have been) teachers. Mary, who has seven children, is a primary teacher with a class of 70. Conditions in her school are very bad, and made far worse by roaming bands of black youths who do not go to school at all, who steal the glass from the school windows—to sell—and who torment her pupils. There are no authorities to turn to; the police can—or will—do nothing if she complains. There is no self-pity in Mary, and she does not sound sour when she speaks of Soweto, but what she says is terrible.

"There is no God in Soweto. Once there was, but He is there no longer."

When Kenneth talks about Soweto he thinks of the future, not the present. He too tells me that many of the schools are closed, that there are twenty thousand young people neither learning nor working, that when the next political explosion takes place it will be worse than 1976. He is sure that the future of the country belongs to the Africans. "The whites will all leave." They will not be thrown out, he explains, for Africans are not racialists. The whites in Mozambique were not thrown out, they left. But there will be bloodshed, he has no doubt about that—bloodshed between blacks. Perhaps it will be between Buthulezi and the African National Congress, though that is only one of many possible line-ups. I realise, as Kenneth talks, how paradoxical such a clash would be. Buthulezi, Christian and man of peace, is above all a Zulu, and his support would probably be tribal. The young revolutionaries (who may, perhaps, support the ANC) are those who believe in racial harmony and brotherhood, but they are violent and

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bitter, and in their present mood want no political dialogue with whites.

Does Kenneth look forward to all this with hope or with dread? He is quite sure what his own position will be: "I'll have to leave, or I may not be safe. I am someone who has collaborated with the system." Yet though he has been a dedicated teacher all his life, there is something like eagerness in his voice as he describes the terrible times to come. I try to ask whether Africans may not be even worse off, if they destroy the educational institutions and even one another, but it is impossible to check his eloquence. As I listen, I thank my stars that I do not live in this country.

IS THERE a secretarial type, in all nations, I ask myself, talking to Kathryn. She is helping to arrange my programme and I find her, like any good secretary, enjoying the task. She rings people up to tell them they must provide transport, she makes sure that I don't have to be in two places at once. Why shouldn't a Cape Coloured girl be the same kind of secretary as an English girl? So then, in reaction, I start to think of the ways in which she isn't an ordinary secretary. Sitting drinking coffee with me on the day I arrived, after we'd been corresponding over six thousand miles, she leans forward and says, impulsively, "I'm so glad you've come at last, and you're so nice. . . ." I realise that people who say that are always nice themselves. We talk about her name: she knows Kathryn is an odd spelling, and it had embarrassed her when she was at school, till she'd complained to her mother, who'd shown her a book where it was spelt like that. After that she'd felt better, and stopped trying to spell it Katherine. It does not occur to her that the spelling her mother gave her was pretentious, and therefore, in her case, it isn't.

One of the things she has arranged for me to do is to run a writers' workshop in a Community Arts Project (it turns out to be one of the most completely inter-racial events I take part in). Two days beforehand she announces that she is coming, and gives me some poems to look at. They are about her feelings for her husband, and are intensely personal. "Arthur tells me I expose myself too much", she smiles. She is on the edge of embarrassment, but unless I push her over the edge she will keep her self-possession. When I meet the people who come to the workshop I realise that it is not an occasion for detailed verbal criticism, so all Kathryn has to do is to read her poems out, which she finds difficult but is pleased, in the end, to have done so. The next day she tells me that she'd said to her husband, "He didn't try to teach me how to write poetry", and her husband had expressed approval. But I sense she is disappointed.

Still, there is nothing South African in any of this, I realise. She could be an English secretary, surely, or American, or German—or white South African. Until we start to talk about *apartheid* in the theatres, and she tells me that she won't go to the Nico Malan, Cape Town's splendid modern theatre complex. If it was for "whites only", she couldn't even decide to boycott it; her argument (and I realise she is passing on a position she has picked up from more politically conscious friends) is that the theatre has a permit, for it is now government policy to allow racially mixed audiences under permit. If the theatre applies for one, Kathryn explains, this implies an acceptance of the system, and many coloureds will not then go. I then learn that the University's new and even more sumptuous Baxter Theatre (recently opened) has been admitting non-whites without a permit, but was then informed, by some authority or other, that they'd been granted a permit. Did this mean non-whites would now refuse to go? Kathryn and her husband go. But I discover that the students at the non-white university are boycotting it. They give as their reason the fact that it was built with the labour of squatters. At this point I give up all attempt at logic, for everyone has been furious at the government's attempt to force African squatters out of the Cape: using squatter labour seemed a good anti-government gesture. . . .

The lunacies of *apartheid*, I realise, breed counter-lunacies in others.

LATER, I MEET some of the students from the non-white university. They show no inhibitions about talking to me, and none of them says (or are they just polite) that I ought not to have visited their institution. But how could they say it, since they are there themselves? Some of them say they are there under protest. One girl protests indignantly that she is happy there, and thinks it a good university. The government is willing to spend money on it, the Rector is coloured, it now has

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(under permit) members of all four racial groups among its students, but very few non-coloured. It must be agonising for a coloured man to decide whether he is in favour of its existence, and for his children to decide whether to go there. Its very existence represents *apartheid* in education, yet the science it teaches is real science; there is far less *apartheid* in the content of its syllabus than there is in the US "Black Studies" programmes so popular with young black Americans. The Rector tells me that he had originally been among the opponents of the institution. But once having taken the post he intends to try and keep it open. When the students rebel—as they do occasionally—he tells them that he is there because in one of their previous rebellions they demanded a coloured rector, and the government gave them one.

For me, the ambivalence of the students is summed up in one brief conversation in the refectory. Looking round, I remark how filthy it is, and comment (with a touch of smugness) that in our university everyone is asked to take his dirty tray back to the counter, and does.

"It is part of our protest", one student explains.

"Nonsense", says the girl who'd said she likes it there, "it is an excuse for their own slovenliness."

The students at this institution are more pleased to see me than their teachers. Most of the teachers are Afrikaners, but my heart does not warm to them as much as it usually does to Afrikaners. They offer me cups of tea, they remark on the weather, but avoid all real conversation—after a while, I begin to think they are avoiding me. Do they think I'm a Communist? Do they think they might say something that will reveal sudden ignorance? Do they just want a quiet life? The most friendly and relaxed of them introduces me to the first-year class I am to lecture to. He tells them who I am, and I see him looking round for something to add. "I should tell you", he tells them, "that Mr Lerner wrote and said he wanted to come here. We didn't invite him, he wrote and asked to come." He gives me a friendly smile, and leaves the platform to me. Perhaps there are some people in favour of a boycott, after all.

Autumn

Two lawyers about their brief,
pin-striped in a Northern village,
paused to peer over a cottage wall.

Attracted by chrysanthemums, moons,
full and white, pale as a sick baby.
The owner contracted to sell four.

And so here they are, South, brought
like a bouquet from the Eastern bloc,
unwrapped, without finesse, a plea,

for forgiveness. He always phones
during dinner, and thinks I answer.
Rising daughters answer phones here.

In the evening the boys come out
like stars, call incessantly.
I go down like the sun at tea-time.

So now four flowers decorate the hall,
quite unmanageable, it ought to be five.
Four sickly infants in a stone jar.

Strong as flowers, weak as images,
each wearing a green leaf as a bib.
I look at them with a mother's eye.

Pamela Lewis

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AUTHORS & CRITICS

Re-reading Hannah Arendt

By Walter Laqueur

FEW BOOKS in living memory have stirred up more bitter controversy than Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, published in 1964. The controversy still continues as the introduction to a recent collection of Mrs Arendt's "Jewish" essays shows,[1] albeit without the acrimony of the earlier debate. The editor clearly believes that Mrs Arendt was misunderstood by her critics. The re-publication of these essays inevitably raises the question what made Mrs Arendt write the book, what it was that provoked so much criticism and whether, in fact, she was misunderstood and injustice done to her.

Hannah Arendt, thirty-five years of age at the time, arrived in the United States in 1941, having escaped from France. Her main intellectual interests had been philosophy and modern literature. She had written a doctoral dissertation on the concept of love in the work of St Augustine; her first articles, published in pre-Hitler Germany, were on Rilke's *Duino Elegies* and on Kierkegaard. She belonged to a generation and a milieu that was basically unpolitical but which had developed a passionate interest in politics—in the widest sense—following Hitler's rise to power and the outbreak of the Second World War. Soon after her arrival in the United States she began to publish articles, first in New York's German-language weekly *Der Aufbau*, later in other periodicals. Her early journalistic work in the USA has been almost entirely neglected (or forgotten) yet it provides essential clues to the genesis of the book that created such a furore two decades later.

WHAT EMERGED FROM these articles was that Hannah Arendt always had doubts about Zionism and that gradually she came to believe that Herzl had been a crackpot; that Zionism was a chauvinistic, fanatical and hysterical phenomenon, and that it had never been a popular movement. At the same time she insisted on the establishment of a Jewish army to fight Nazism "for the glory and the honour of the Jewish people"—this was the theme of her very first article in the United States and of many that were to follow. Her demand was based on something like a neo-Bundist ideology. An army is usually the function of a state—except perhaps in the case of Prussia, where according to an old saying, the state was a mere appendage of the army. But since Hannah Arendt did not want a state for the Jews, her demand for an army was curious, to say the least. She was at this time very much preoccupied with the fate of the Jews in Europe and, above all, with Jewish resistance. Thus a report published in *Aufbau* about the "*Musterghetto* Theresienstadt" provided an occasion to develop a theory to explain Nazi policy towards the Jews. Jews are tolerated, and sometimes even protected, where their presence will create anti-Semitism among the local population; they will be deported from regions which are not anti-Semitic. Jews are deported from areas where their very presence could lead to resistance. ("If Mrs Mueller in Germany sees that her neighbour, Mrs Schmidt, behaves decently to Mrs Cohn, she knows that she must not be afraid of Mrs Schmidt—she may even talk openly to Mrs Schmidt.")[2] An ingenious theory no doubt—but quite wrong. On another occasion, writing on the "part of the Jewish partisans in the European uprising", Hannah Arendt noted that the European Jews were not doomed: the Jews of Europe no longer faced a separate fate if they refused to accept it. ("*Die Gesetzmaessigkeiten des fuedischen Sonderschicksals verloren immer ihre Gueltigkeit wenn Juden sich weigerten, es als Schicksal zu akzeptieren.*")[3] Or to put it into more simple language: The Jews did not have to die if they did not want to die. A small minority of Jewish millionaires and scoundrels had acted as traitors, but a very substantial part of the people had chosen the road of armed struggle. She wrote about a hundred thousand Jewish partisans in Poland, ten thousand in France—fighting the Nazis in the streets, fields, and forests. . . .

EVEN BEFORE the War ended Hannah Arendt gave her mind to the question of guilt, noting that the number of those responsible and guilty among the Germans was relatively small. Hence the conclusion that there was no political method for dealing with German mass crimes; "where all are guilty, nobody in the last analysis can be judged." Even in

[1] *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*. By HANNAH ARENDT. Edited with an introduction by RON H. FELDMAN. Grove Press, New York, $12.50.

[2] "*Musterghetto* Theresienstadt", in *Aufbau* (35, 1943); "Die wahren Gruende fuer Theresienstadt" (36, 1943).

[3] "Die juedischen Partisanen im europaeischen Aufstand", *Aufbau* (36, 1944).

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a murder camp, Mrs Arendt noted, everyone, whether directly active or not, was forced to take part in one way or another in the workings of the machine—"that is the horrible thing." [4]

This in brief outline was the origin of the concept of "the Banality of Evil." (I recently came across it in Joseph Conrad's preface to *Under Western Eyes*, written well before the First World War; but it may have been used before.)

Hannah Arendt was fearful of the great opportunities that would exist in Europe after the War for the re-emergence of an international fascist organisation. The arch evil of our time had been defeated but not completely eradicated—except in the areas under immediate Russian influence, where the "forces of yesterday" had been destroyed once and forever.[5]

I HAVE concentrated on the issues that have a direct bearing on the controversy of the early 1960s. A reading of Hannah Arendt's political journalism shows that she was more often wrong than right both in her analysis and predictions. There was always an inclination on her part to exaggerate as well as to generalise and to be original on the basis of a slender factual basis. She had considerable intelligence but little common sense and apparently no political instinct—she was a philosophical not a political animal.

The case of Theresienstadt is an extreme case in point. The obvious explanation provided in *Aufbau*, that of a *Musterghetto*, was quite right, which is more than can be said about the theories about "selective deportation." Again, the fears of a great revival of fascism after the War are psychologically understandable; but they were not at all borne out by subsequent events. The fact that she had so often been wrong did not ever shake Hannah Arendt's confidence in her own judgment. In one of her very last essays she wrote that "Anti-Communism" was "at the root of all theories in Washington—in sheer ignorance of all pertinent facts. . . ." This from the woman who had been one of the most influential architects of the concept of Totalitarianism, who had explained in *The Burden of our Time* that Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia were "two essentially identical systems." True, Mrs Arendt later retracted this; after the Hungarian revolt in 1956 (which deeply influenced her) she wrote that the closed system of the Soviet Union was no longer "totalitarian" in the strict sense of the term; one of the reasons given was the food supplies sent to the Hungarians, another . . . the flowering of the arts in the Soviet Union! Mrs Arendt had fundamentally exaggerated in 1951, and then again after 1956 without, however, incurring lasting damage either to her self-confidence or to her reputation.

THERE WAS A GENERAL TENDENCY during the War and indeed for quite a few years after to overrate the importance (and the numerical strength) of Jewish resistance in Europe. The same is true, incidentally, with regard to War-time resistance in general—excepting only Yugoslavia. I have dealt with this topic in a recent study (*Guerrilla*); all that need be said in this context is that resistance was physically possible only in a very few countries. The dramatic reports about tens and hundreds of thousands of *maquis*, Jewish or non-Jewish, were of course sheer fantasy. Thus, seen in retrospect, European Jews did not live up to Mrs Arendt's expectations as fighters for the glory and honour of their people; as a result they were punished, for if they had fought, they (or at least many of them) would have survived; since most of them did not fight, five or six millions were killed. Mrs Arendt found mitigating circumstances for non-Jews—since everyone in a murder-camp was forced to take part in the working of the machine. She did not make such allowances for her fellow Jews.

HANNAH ARENDT attended the Eichmann trial as a journalist, and her account was published in five instalments in *The New Yorker* magazine in late spring of 1963. It became a *succès de scandale* from the first moment. Some critics were shocked by the medium chosen by Mrs Arendt—a witty weekly, entertaining, frivolous, intellectually pretentious and quite unserious. An investigation into mass murder set out among Peter Arno's cartoons, the advertisements for Cadillacs and Oldsmobiles, Beefeater gin and holidays in Bermuda—a little bit of Holocaust, a little bit of Tiffany and Saks Fifth Avenue—it was quite a remarkable mixture. Others complained about her style, the snide remarks, the flippancy and superciliousness—and its concomitant: the heartlessness. Yet others pointed to the unfortunate tendency on the part of the author throughout her book to use terms that were emotionally highly charged, and to apply a double yardstick.

Thus, when Gideon Hausner (the chief Israeli prosecutor) asked some of the survivors of the death camps why they had not offered armed resistance, Mrs Arendt expressed indignation about cruel and foolish questions of this kind. But her own critique of the Jewish leadership rested precisely on the same basis: Those who did not fight were guilty. Again, any form of contact between Jewish leaders and the Nazis, even when the aim was to make the emigration of Jews possible, or to

[4] H. Arendt: "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility", *Jewish Frontier* (January 1945).

[5] "The Seeds of a Fascist International", *Jewish Frontier* (June 1945).

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save lives, was "collaboration" as far as Dr Arendt was concerned. But the term "collaboration" in the context of the Second World War has a certain connotation of which the author was no doubt quite aware. If she believed that Jews should *not* have talked to the Nazis *under any circumstances*, she should have said so. But she did not, and for this reason the indiscriminate use of the term was irresponsible. A German critic was taken aback by the fact that Dr Arendt had singled out two Germans who had resisted—one was the right-wing writer Reck Malleczewen, the other the liberal-existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers. Reck Malleczewen had died in a concentration camp, but there is no known evidence that Professor Jaspers (although his books were censored and his Jewish wife was in hiding) ever "resisted", in the Arendt-heroical sense, the *Gestapo* state. Why then was he singled out? Because he was Hannah Arendt's teacher in Heidelberg to whom she remained devoted to the end of his life (he died in Basel in 1969).

This little episode is revealing: while in no way central to Hannah Arendt's arguments, it was typical of her approach to history. But it has yet another aspect which, to the best of my knowledge, has not so far been noted: the curious resemblance between master and disciple. Both were philosophers, both felt from time to time obliged to comment on politics, frequently on a high pitch, bordering on excitements and obsessions—from which their philosophical writings were quite free. Thus Jaspers, during the height of the Cold War, emerges as an advocate of West Germany's nuclear rearmament. In the 1960s, on the other hand, he published a treatise (*The Future of Germany*) in which he demonstrated that West Germany was well on the way towards abolishing parliamentary democracy and, to all intents and purposes, to becoming "fascist" again. This book was published in the United States with a preface by Hannah Arendt in which she stated that "politically [this is] the most important book to appear after the Second World War...." Had Hannah Arendt really believed this, she would certainly have published at least an article in the same vein. She did not, which surely suggests that she had reservations. But filial piety nevertheless prevailed over intellectual integrity.

THE MOST detailed and ambitious, but in many respects least effective reply to Hannah Arendt was the late Jacob Robinson's *And the Crooked Shall be Made Straight*, a book of more than 400 pages published in 1965. The late Dr Robinson probably knew all there was to know about the factual background and with his jurist's training he was also an expert on the legal implications of War Crime trials. His technique in the book was that of the lawyer who wishes to discredit a hostile witness by showing that he is not really master of the subject. And so he relentlessly subjected every word of Dr Arendt to critical examination, pointing out that the correct spelling of a certain *SS-Obergruppenfuehrer* should be Hanns (not Hans) —as if mistakes of this kind necessarily disqualified her from commenting on *SS* policy. Dr Robinson's book was a case of overkill; he demonstrated that Dr Arendt had indeed committed many mistakes, partly in view of a cavalier attitude to facts, partly perhaps out of genuine ignorance. She knew, after all, neither Hebrew nor Yiddish, neither Polish nor Russian; and most of the relevant literature was at the time in these languages. She had to rely basically on Professor Raoul Hilberg's book (a book on the Nazis, not on the Jews) and on what she learned during the day-to-day proceedings of the Eichmann trial. But Robinson's book, hastily written, also contained factual mistakes; it failed to tackle important issues; it was inconsistent, claiming at one and the same time that much further study was needed on "collaboration" and that there had been no collaboration and treason at all among the Jews. Above all, Dr Robinson, in the light of his background, training and interests, was quite obviously the wrong person to "refute" Hannah Arendt—immersed in questions of plodding detail, he could not possibly follow her to the rarified heights of abstraction where the moral philosopher indulges herself in virtuoso turns, but where Dr Robinson would be quite lost.

I SHOULD MENTION in passing my own involuntary involvement in the affair. I had reviewed Dr Robinson's book at the time and had noted its shortcomings. This produced an irate reply from Hannah Arendt, far longer than the original review. It dealt largely with Dr Robinson's book rather than my review which mainly served as a "peg" for her rejoinder. My review had been more moderate than most, and there had been no anger in it. But Mrs Arendt was far from satisfied. She was at the time already something of a cult figure among the New York City intelligentsia. She did not mind being attacked, but she evidently disliked not being taken very seriously as a student of contemporary Jewish history. And so she imputed to the reviewer sinister motives: Mr Laqueur, she implied, was dependent on Dr Robinson, a vassal jumping to the aid of his seigneur. My relations with the late Dr Robinson were neither close, nor (for a variety of reasons) friendly. Hannah Arendt, who did not know me at all, could not possibly know about my relations, if any, with Dr Robinson; and yet she was quite ready to assume the worst, to insinuate and incriminate. Her reaction greatly intrigued me, even though I knew of course that statements made in the heat of polemics should not be taken too seriously nor remembered for too long. Hannah Arendt was certainly at the time in a state of near

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panic (as her writings show), firmly convinced that the Elders of Zion had conspired to "get her."

HANNAH ARENDT'S main arguments are well known and can be summarised therefore in briefest outline. Eichmann was guilty and deserved to be executed, but he was an idealist in a perverted way. He had no criminal intent; he was basically a normal human being acting under the pressure of a totalitarian régime for which he was not personally responsible. Hence the conclusion that justice was not done in Jerusalem. It was the wrong court condemning him for the wrong reasons. He should have been hanged as *hostis generis humani*; rather than *hostis Judaeorum*. Dr Arendt attributed to this distinction enormous importance; I failed to see the crucial significance of this issue at the time, and I am afraid I have not become any wiser in the years between. Far more important are the charges she made against Jewish leaders and their responsibility for the catastrophe. Without their active collaboration ("mere compliance would not have been enough") the destruction of so many millions of Jews would not have been possible—"there would have been either complete chaos or an impossibly severe drain on German manpower." The "ghetto police", Mrs Arendt reported, was an instrument in the hands of the murderers; the actual work of killing in the extermination centres was usually in the hands of Jewish commandos, who also dug the graves and extinguished the traces of mass murder, and had built the gas chambers in the first place. Thus Jewish cooperation put an end to the clear-cut division (in Camus' phrase) between "victims and executioners." There was a moral collapse among the victims. The leadership, almost without exception, cooperated in one way or another, for one reason or another, with the Nazis. If the Jewish people had been unorganised and leaderless, there would have been chaos, and plenty of misery, but the total number of victims would hardly have been between five and six million. Hence the conclusion that this role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people is undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story.

Some of these allegations are true; some are wrong; most are only half true. There is no reason to assume that if the Jewish people had been "leaderless", the Nazis would have found the killing more difficult or even impossible. It has frequently been pointed out that the extermination proceeded quite smoothly even where there were no "Jewish Councils"—or where the "Jewish Councils" were not required to collaborate with the Nazis in the preparation for the final solution, *die Endlösung*. Nor is it true that the division between executioners and victims was obliterated. But even if resistance would not have meant survival, this still leaves the painful issue of "Jewish appeasement."

Hannah Arendt's condemnation of appeasement is basically correct as a rule of political behaviour when dealing with enemies of this kind. It is inexplicable how Dr Robinson could possibly write in 1965 that "there is no evidence that the motivation in accepting and maintaining membership in the *Judenraete* was not generally honourable." There was a great deal of such evidence. But there was no conspiracy of silence, no deliberate attempt to whitewash villains or to make heroes out of doubtful characters—as Mrs Arendt seems to have believed: she saw herself, no doubt, as a champion of truth which had been suppressed too long. There was a certain reluctance to deal systematically with the most tragic subject of all—for the very same reason that there has been reluctance in every European country (including the neutral ones)—to come to terms with the many manifestations of "collaboration" in the Nazi era. The Jewish case was different, to be sure, because Frenchmen or Dutchmen had a certain freedom of choice. They did not *have* to collaborate. (A recent French writer notes, "*le collaborationisme n'était pas une fatalité. Un Louis Marin ou un Louis Vallon adhéraient en 1939 aux mêmes partis qu'un Philippe Henriot ou un Marcel Déat* . . .") The Jews did not have to collaborate either; but the alternative was considerably more unpleasant.

There had been books and articles, countless autobiographies and memoirs on the "Jewish Councils" in Poland (by Philip Friedman and others); in Holland (by Abel Herzberg and others); in Theresienstadt (by H. G. Adler); and elsewhere. Professor Hilberg's book, which had many harsh things to say about the Jewish reaction, had already appeared; and it was Hannah Arendt's main source. The facts were known but they had not fully registered (even though, as in the famous Kastner trial, the basic issues had been discussed). If many of the facts referred to in Hannah Arendt's book had been known for a long time, what made so many people so angry about *Eichmann in Jerusalem*? And why, then, did the book become a *cause célèbre*?

Her series of articles, and the book that subsequently emerged were of course far more widely read than the scholarly articles or monographs dealing with the same subject. The scholars (among whom there were, and are, quite a few not less extreme than Hannah Arendt in their condemnation of collaboration) were more cautious in stating their conclusions, not because they were "afraid", but because they were more aware of the complexity of the situation; the horrendous pressures under which the "Jewish Councils" had been acting. Hannah Arendt's book on the other hand, was impressionistic and subjective; there was her usual tendency towards exaggeration. She attacked without discrimination the *entire* Jewish leadership

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in Europe and made some exceedingly silly remarks which she probably later regretted (the reference to Leo Baeck as the "Jewish Fuehrer"—without quotation remarks). She attacked Zionists for their collaboration with the Nazis (referring to the organisation of illegal immigration) and also *because of certain ideological similarities, real or* imaginary. Thus she antagonised all Zionists and pro-Zionists.

But this, again, does not explain the vehement reactions triggered off by her book. The most telling criticism came from non-Zionists (such as Eva Reichmann) or anti-Zionists, or Zionists such as Ernst Simon, Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem who had belonged to *Brith Shalom* which stood for Arab-Jewish collaboration and which had been actively supported by Hannah Arendt. Her attitude towards Zionism was by no means as consistent as commonly believed: while she supported *Ichud*, she also had sympathies for Menachem Begin's *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, which (in her view) attracted the most decent and idealist elements. This apparent paradox is not difficult to explain. Dr Arendt hated "conciliators" and "appeasers" (such as Chaim Weizmann); she always had a weakness for those who fought and resisted. She belonged to those intellectuals about whom it has been said that *ils n'aiment que les trains qui partent*—the direction of the departure is always a secondary consideration.

HANNAH ARENDT was bitterly attacked precisely because she was held in such high esteem by many of her contemporaries. This, in a way, was quite unfair; for she had, after all, not made her name as a contemporary historian. She had moved very far from her national Jewish enthusiasm of 1942–43, but no one expected that she would want deliberately and unnecessarily to cause offence and pain. Hannah Arendt's attitude towards her people (her personal "Jewish problem") was complex; and there is little doubt that this had a bearing on the writing of this book. (Sooner or later, someone more familiar with this aspect than the present writer will deal with this element in the affair.)

Hannah Arendt was mainly attacked not for *what* she said, but for *how* she said it. She was at once highly intelligent and exceedingly insensitive. She would not, or could not, discriminate, see the nuances, and this in a context in which nuances were all-important. She certainly had the intellectual equipment to deal with the subject: but not the temperament. She was one of the cleverest writers of her generation; but the Holocaust is a subject in which cleverness can be a positive disadvantage. Her memory was selective: when she wrote about Eichmann, she had forgotten almost all she had ever written about the "human condition" in a Totalitarian State. The Holocaust is a subject that has to be confronted in a spirit of humility; whatever Mrs Arendt's many virtues, *humility was not among them.* "Judge not, that ye be not judged"—but Hannah Arendt loved to judge, and was at her most effective in the role of *magister humanitatis*, invoking moral pathos. And thus she rushed in where wiser men and women feared to tread, writing about extreme situations which she in her life had never experienced, an intellectual by temperament always inclined to overstatement, most at ease when dealing with abstractions, at her weakest when analysing real people in concrete situations. The constellation was as unfortunate as the result predictable.

THE EICHMANN CONTROVERSY did not do any lasting harm to Hannah Arendt's reputation. On the contrary, at the time of her death (in 1975) she was widely thought to be one of the most original and influential of thinkers. She was an erudite and brilliant woman; she wrote well; her ideas appealed to Left and Right alike—an almost unique case of the time. Even her confusion seemed attractive in the Manhattan of the 1960s. The fact that her political comments and her historical *obiter dicta* were often wrong was quite immaterial. One can easily think of professional politicians being wrong most of the time; they seem not to be worse off as a result; in politics it is far more damaging to be right at the wrong time.

Nor should it be forgotten that she had made her name as a political philosopher, not as a political journalist. True, Hannah Arendt's political philosophy has also baffled admirers and critics alike. One of them (a highly sympathetic commentator) admitted that most of what she had written about Totalitarianism had been wrong, but still her book was a "considerable work of art, vivid and enthralling, intensely reflective. Even when it fails as history it succeeds as reflection. . . ."[6] It is certainly true that when *The Origins of Totalitarianism* appeared it was more enthusiastically welcomed by literary figures than by students of history and politics.

The romantic streak in Hannah Arendt has been noted by many. Perhaps *Eichmann in Jerusalem* too should be treated aesthetically rather than as historial analysis? If so, it may well remain one of the few works of art inspired by that trial.

THERE STILL IS a last paradox: the relationship between the political philosopher and the political journalist. Is a political philosopher reliable who can be trusted only on the level of abstraction? I

[6] Margaret Canovan, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt* (1974), p.47.

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have been assured that there is only a tenuous link between these two activities. A great art historian is not necessarily the best expert to establish the provenance or authenticity of a painting.

IT HAS BEEN ARGUED—(by Leni Yahil among others) that it was the merit of Hannah Arendt's book to provide fresh impetus to the study of the *Judenrat* phenomenon and, more generally speaking, the issue of "collaboration." This is, I believe, only partially correct. Even before *Eichmann in Jerusalem* appeared there had been a great deal of comment on the subject. Solomon Bloom had written a memorable essay on Rumkovski and the Lodz Ghetto as far back as 1949; Friedmann had written on Gens (of the Vilna Ghetto) and Merin; N. Blumenthal on Bialistok; and there were many more studies both for the general public and of a more specialised character. Two of the most important books on the "Jewish Councils" appeared in 1965 and 1972 respectively (Presser's *Ondergang* and I. Trunk's *Judenrat*). During the last fifteen years there have been more specialised studies on the "Jewish Councils" in Holland, in Hungary (Braham), in Theresienstadt (L. Rothkirchen) and, above all, in Poland. Following the publication of the Czerniakov diaries, there has been much illuminating comment on the *Judenrat* phenomenon. Some writers have recently tried to draw an interim balance, comparing the findings of various studies. Most of this work, I suggest, would have been done in any case; and thus the impact of the "controversy" consists mainly in having compelled her contemporaries to rethink the whole issue of Jewish collaboration and resistance during the Second World War.

I doubt whether anyone basically changed his views as a result. There are some (e.g. Dvorzhetzki and Eisenbach) who see the *Judenrat* virtually without exception in a negative light. N. Blumenthal in his investigation of the Lublin *Judenrat* reaches the conclusion that not all were "criminals and traitors", but that even those who were not, objectively served as "Nazi tools." Others (such as Z. A. Braun, Weiss, and Kaplinski) maintain that a wholesale condemnation of the *Judenrat* distorts history. They argue that there were enormous differences between conditions in one ghetto and another, that in a few the *Judenrat* closely collaborated with the resistance, that in some (perhaps twenty per cent according to Trunk) the German orders were carried out with excessive zeal and no attempt was made to circumvent and sabotage them; and that in most places the general strategy was to gain time. Yehuda Bauer has noted that if the advancing Red Army had reached Lodz a few months earlier, then Rumkovski, the "King" of the local ghetto, would have entered the annals of Jewish history as a hero, and not as a traitor. It is also true that one has to differentiate between the period before the deportations started (when the *Judenrat* engaged in the administration of the ghetto) and the time thereafter when Jewish leaders actively participated in the selection of the victims who were to be sent to the extermination camps.

SO IT IS THAT fifteen years after the "Arendt controversy" we are no nearer to a consensus than before, and it is quite likely that there never will be agreement; partly because (as has been noted) conditions varied so much from place to place, partly also because there are genuine differences of opinion with regard to what could have been expected from Jewish communities facing the Nazi terror machine. If in many cases "mitigating circumstances" can be found—even if some leaders in fact behaved heroically—the *Judenrat* phenomenon, as a whole, has acquired a negative connotation; and rightly so. From the moment that the "Jewish Councils" were used by the Nazis to help in the "Final Solution", their action became indefensible. True, it can always be argued that they acted to prevent worse from happening: but this argument has been heard too often.

Why was there so little resistance? The question deeply bothered Hannah Arendt and most contemporaries. The answer is in many ways obvious. Given the isolation of the Jews, the demographic structure of the Jewish communities, the lack of psychological and organisational preparation, the hostility of the non-Jewish population in Eastern Europe, the lack of arms, the unsuitability of the surrounding terrain, there could not have been much resistance—certainly not successful resistance.

But could there have been more resistance than there was? And why did Jews let themselves be slaughtered like sheep? Hannah Arendt was doubly shocked—partly because during the War she had imagined that there *had* been a great deal of resistance—only to find out later that this had not been the case. But she was also by temperament one of the intellectuals who had great admiration for men or women of action (preferably intellectuals who were also doers—such as Rosa Luxemburg—even if the results were disastrous). The meekness of the Jews seemed intolerable in retrospect. She looked for a scapegoat, and she found it in the "Jewish leadership."

SIXTY YEARS BEFORE Hannah Arendt published her book, the greatest modern Hebrew poet, after the Kishinev pogrom (1903), wrote his *Ba'ir Ha'hariga* (In the City of Slaughter):

> "Great is the sorrow and great is the shame—and which of the two is greater, answer thou, O

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son of man.... The grandsons of the Maccabeans—they ran like mice, they hid themselves like bed-bugs and died the death of dogs wherever found."

Bialik's indictment was far stronger than Hannah Arendt's, but there were no irate reviews, no protests, no refutations. His poem, unlike Hannah Arendt's book, influenced a whole generation.

Was it because Arendt's book, pretending to be an objective historical account, contained much that was unfair or untrue? I do not think that this was the main reason, for her book also contained much that was true. His contemporaries felt that Hayyim Nahman Bialik's attack was born out of agony. Hannah Arendt's reproaches were those of an outsider, lacking identification; they were almost inhumanly cold and they were based on a profound ignorance of the historical realities. They were never adequately reflected in her philosophical abstractions, and were, in part at least, rooted in an aesthetical approach. The situation was not comparable to the Irish 1916 Easter Rising which William Butler Yeats welcomed for its "terrible beauty." There was no beauty in the Holocaust and no real hope in desperate Jewish convulsions. A tragic uprising like the Warsaw Ghetto revolt was not for the living but a gesture for posterity.

Degas's Laundresses

You rise, you dawn
Roll-sleeved Aphrodites
Out of a camisole brine,
A linen pit of stitches,
Silking the fitted sheets
Away from you like waves.

You seam dreams in the folds
Of wash from which freshes
The whiff and reach of fields
Where it bleached and stiffened.
Your chat's sabbatical:
Brides, wedding outfits,

A pleasure of leisured women
Are sweated into the crease,
The neat heaps of linen.
Now the rasp of the clasp.
Your wrists basket your waist:
You round to the square weight.

Wait. There. Behind you.
A man. There behind you.
Whatever you do don't turn.
Why is he watching you.
Whatever you do don't turn.
Whatever you do don't turn.

See he takes his ease
Staking his easel so,
Slowly sharpening charcoal,
Closing his eyes just so
Slowly smiling as if
So slowly he is

Unbandaging his mind.
Surely a good laundress
Would understand its twists,
Its white turns,
Its blind designs,

It's your winding sheet.

Eavan Boland

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Arguments (New & Old) about the Hiss Case

YOU AND YOUR REVIEWER, Sidney Hook, have both evidently been persuaded that Allen Weinstein's book *Perjury* finally closes the case against Alger Hiss. May I explain why it does not have that effect on me?

The sheer volume of Weinstein's research is certainly impressive. It is his detailed handling of the mass of material that raises doubts. For instance, he treats inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the testimony of Whittaker Chambers with a consistent charity that he does not extend to Hiss.

Chambers repeatedly told his interviewers and interrogators, starting with Adolf Berle in 1939, that he quit the Communist Party in 1937. This was the year he gave to security officials in 1942 and 1946 as well as to the House Un-American Activities Committee in August 1948. Only after he had produced the copies of State Department papers which he claimed Hiss had retyped and passed on to him did he finally fix on April 1938 as the month he quit the party.

The date when Chambers quit the party was obviously important since the State Department papers originated in the first quarter of 1938. If Chambers had ceased to be a Communist and an agent in 1937 he could not have laid hands on them in the way he claimed, as a link in an espionage network. Of course, Chambers may indeed have got his dates wrong in 1939, 1942, 1946 and August 1948 but it is strange that Weinstein should write off the inconsistency as mere "inaccuracies."

Contrast this with the way in which Weinstein makes the most of apparent oddities in Hiss's own files, where Weinstein claims to have found evidence of a cover-up. Hiss, in Weinstein's view, knew all along what had happened to the old typewriter he and his wife had owned in the 1930s, but he kept quiet about it. While he and his wife were telling investigators they could not remember what they had done with the machine—perhaps they had given it to the Salvation Army or a dealer—they knew perfectly well. The evidence for this is that (on 7 December 1948) Hiss told one of his lawyers, John F. Davis, to check on a machine he remembered giving to the son of a maid, Pat Catlett. This road, after many twists and turns, eventually brought the Hiss defence team to Woodstock N230099, the machine the defence produced in court. But meanwhile Hiss continued to deny that he knew what had happened to his typewriter.

Upon this slender basis, Weinstein constructs the cover-up. But surely a much less conspiratorial interpretation is more plausible, that Hiss suggested the Catlett lead as one possibility among several worth checking out. Davis, after all, did nothing about the idea for three weeks, so he cannot have thought it all that important. But if Hiss really did want to keep the whereabouts of his machine secret, he would surely not have mentioned the Catlett lead to Davis at all. This point occurs to Weinstein who writes in a footnote: "Why Hiss told even Davis . . . remains unclear" (p.289). But it is only unclear because it does not fit in with Weinstein's cover-up theory. Dismantle the theory and there is no problem.

WEINSTEIN'S TREATMENT of the way in which the prosecution and the defence handled what they knew about the typewriter is also puzzling. Summing up what both sides had learned by the opening of Hiss's first trial, he writes that "neither the government nor the Hiss defence wished to tell all that it knew about the search for Woodstock

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SIDNEY HOOK*'s article, "The Case of Alger Hiss", appeared in the August 1978 issue of* ENCOUNTER.

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N230099." But on Weinstein's own showing what the two sides were keeping back was very different. Hiss withheld the *opinions* of experts he had hired who said that his own household letters and Chambers's documents had been typed on the same machine. But the prosecution withheld *material evidence*. It had witnesses whose testimony would have cast serious doubt as to whether Woodstock N230099 really was the machine the Hisses had acquired from Mrs Hiss's father, Thomas Fansler, and that in turn would have raised questions about whether the experts really were able to make a correct identification of which typewriter typed which papers. Weinstein treats the tactics of both sides as mere manoeuvres, more or less equally reprehensible, but the sins of one cancelling out the sins of the other. But withholding material evidence is a very different legal matter to withholding opinions.

WEINSTEIN'S WAY with his evidence becomes most mysterious to me when he discusses whether Chambers had reason to fear for his life. Chambers certainly claimed that he did. That was why he squirrelled away the State Department papers, his "life preservers." If Soviet intelligence thought these papers might surface on Chambers's death, then they might spare him. But is there any evidence of a real threat, other than Chambers's own word?

Weinstein claims to have identified a fully-fledged GPU agent sent from Europe to hunt Chambers down. The identification was made with the help of one Paul Willert, described by Weinstein as one of "Five participants in Soviet intelligence work in the United States and Europe during the 1930s", who provided Weinstein with "revelations." According to Weinstein the agent was known to Chambers as "Ulrich" and Chambers "mistakenly believed him to be a Ukrainian GPU agent."

Paul Willert is now head of the British end of ELF, the French energy company, but in the late 1930s he ran the New York office of the Oxford University Press. In that role he gave Chambers translation work to do.

According to Weinstein, the GPU agent looking for Chambers was a Czech named Otto Katz. At dinner one night Katz asked Willert to help him find Chambers. Willert refused, then tipped off Chambers about Katz's interest in him. (Thereafter, Katz disappears from the story, which is rather odd behaviour for a GPU agent when you think about it. He asks a contact at dinner to help him find the man he has come from Europe to deal with; his contact refuses to help; whereupon the agent apparently throws in his hand.)

Since Weinstein's book was published, Willert has denied to me, both verbally and in writing, every significant particular in it about him. Willert says that he had known Katz when he worked in Berlin as a newspaperman (his father, Sir Arthur Willert, was the correspondent of the London *Times* in Washington during the First World War, and later the Foreign Office spokesman). Willert is happy to acknowledge that he was an anti-Nazi and carried messages into Germany in the late 1930s for opponents of Hitler—Socialists, Communists, Catholics, Jews. (Perhaps this is what makes him into Weinstein's "participant in Soviet intelligence work.") At any rate, Willert denies that he was ever a Communist, let alone a Soviet agent, and Weinstein produces no evidence that he was.

Willert and Katz had a mutual friend in Gustave Regler, a novelist whose work Chambers was translating for another publisher, on Willert's recommendation. If, Willert says, Katz had asked to meet Chambers it would only have been because he was interested in meeting Regler's translator. According to Willert, Katz's visit to New York was quite open. Willert, Katz and Regler went off to California together to raise money for European refugees, something Weinstein refrains from mentioning.

Of course, Willert's denial would not matter if Weinstein could produce confirmation from another source, but all he has is Chambers's own word. Weinstein's logic is reduced to this: Chambers said a GPU agent, a Ukrainian called "Ulrich", was looking for him; Willert tells Weinstein that Otto Katz may have come to meet Chambers; ergo "Ulrich" was Katz.

WEINSTEIN ALSO refrains from telling us the ultimate fate of Katz, which might have shed an interesting light on Willert. Katz returned to Prague and under the name of André Simone gained high office in the post-War Communist Government, but in 1952 he was arraigned with a dozen other leaders, including the party secretary Rudolf Slansky. Like the others, Katz confessed. He said, among other things: "I confess that in October 1939 I pledged myself to collaborate with the British Intelligence Service in the office of their agent Paul Willert in the Hotel George V in Paris." Bizarrely enough, Noel Coward was named in Katz's confession as Willert's intelligence superior. Is it likely that the Communists would put such a confession into Katz's mouth if Willert really had been a Soviet agent? (Katz was not so lucky as Chambers at the hands of the Communists. Chambers died a natural death; Katz was hung.)

Anyone who gets involved in the Hiss case seems to develop a particular obsession about it. Sidney Hook's appears to be with Hiss's refusal to admit his guilt these past 30 years. My own is

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rather more humdrum. I have never been able to understand why Hiss, if he were a spy, should have chosen the clumsy and time-consuming espionage technique of taking documents home and retyping them at nights. There must have been easier ways, even in the 1930s.

But all this is idle speculation. What makes Hiss guilty is the verdict of a court, not the verdict of Weinstein's book nor your support for it. Hiss has now petitioned the Court in New York to have his conviction set aside, using much of the same new material as Weinstein. Let us leave it to the court to decide which of them has made the most persuasive use of that material.

Eric Jacobs

Claims & Counter-Claims

PROFESSOR SIDNEY HOOK CLAIMS that Allen Weinstein has established beyond any question that Hiss belonged to the little coterie of Communist intellectuals known as the Ware group because it was led by one Harold Ware, killed in a car crash in 1935. When Chambers published *Witness* in 1954, it contained a long story of his having introduced Hiss to Harold Ware at lunch in a Washington restaurant and it also spoke of his meetings with Ware, Hiss and the Communist agent, J. Peters. There is, however, one important piece of information which Weinstein either withholds or does not know—namely, that on 3 August 1948 Chambers was testifying under oath before the House Un-American Activities Committee and a Committee member asked him what Harold Ware's real name was. "As far as I know, 'Harold Ware'", Chambers replied. "I never knew him."

Hook speaks of the scope and immensity of Weinstein's labours, but in actual fact, those labours were not as Herculean as they have been made out to be. Weinstein began working on his book in 1969. In 1975 he had a sabbatical and he took off the last half of 1977, but for the rest of the time that he was working on the book he was also carrying a full teaching load. He did not begin receiving the 40,000 pages of FBI material until after his sabbatical was over, in 1976. He had eight young Smith College graduates to help him, but the book, massive though it undoubtedly is, was put together in a hurry. It was known that Hiss was going to court with a *coram nobis* petition to have his indictment set aside, and were he to win his suit, there would have been no market for Weinstein's book. No doubt the necessity for headlong speed accounts for the omissions, inaccuracies and distortions with which the book is literally brimming.

BASING HIMSELF ON Weinstein's text, Professor Hook says that Hiss was publicly identified as a secret member of the Communist Party by the House Un-American Activities Committee. As John Chabot Smith has pointed out in the June issue of *Harper's*, Hiss, when working for a Senatorial investigating committee early in his career, earned the undying enmity of millionaire Bernard Baruch by blowing him out of the water for profiteering in World War I.

"That young man is a Communist!" said the enraged financier to his life-long friend, James F. Byrnes, who later became Truman's Secretary of State and who passed Baruch's remark along to J. Edgar Hoover—who in turn passed it along to HUAC. The FBI Papers indicating that Hiss's alleged Communism was nothing more than Baruch's long-held grudge were among those released to Weinstein and others, but Weinstein either chose to ignore them or in his haste, never looked at them.

WHEN WEINSTEIN'S book came out, Victor Navasky, editor of *The Nation*, wrote to six people whom Weinstein had interviewed and whom he had described as "key figures", asking them whether Weinstein had reported accurately in his book what they had said when he interviewed them. All six replied in great anger that he had twisted and distorted their remarks—sometimes to the extent of making them appear to say exactly the opposite of what they had really said. Hook says triumphantly that Weinstein is vindicated because he has them all on tape, but Professor Hook appears not to know that Weinstein—in a fashion reminiscent of Nixon at Watergate—will not let anyone hear the tapes.

The appointment was set up for Navasky and two witnesses to hear them. It was agreed that the session was not to last more than three hours and Navasky was to bring a list of not more than 20 questions to be answered from Weinstein's files. When Navasky and his witnesses showed up, however, Mrs Weinstein met them at the door and said that Navasky had broken the agreement—in what way, was not specified—and that Weinstein would not let him hear the tapes. The inference is inescapable that the tapes do not back Weinstein up.

Incidentally, Professor Weinstein is now the defendant in a $3,000,000 libel suit brought by one of the "key figures", Sam Krieger, whom Weinstein mistakenly described as an escaped murderer.

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SPACE DOES NOT PERMIT detailed refutation of further Weinstein errors, trustingly passed on by Hook. Weinstein's defenders reply to criticisms from Navasky and others by saying that their strictures are peripheral; but these defenders do not go on to state what the core of the matter is, as distinguished from the periphery, and to affirm that Weinstein is sound as a bell about the core.

The core of the matter certainly consists of two issues: First, the date of Chambers's leaving the Communist Party and second, the provenance of the typewriter.

Chambers stated on 16 separate occasions that he left the Party at the end of 1937. Then, when he came into court with State Department papers he claimed to have got from Hiss—and the papers were dated from January to April 1938—he changed his story and said he did not leave until 15 April 1938. The switch was a shattering sensation at the time and remains one of the permanent puzzles of the Hiss case, but Weinstein omits to mention Chambers's oft-reiterated 1937 date and accepts without question or comment 15 April. In his notes at the back of the book, he "corroborates" this latter date by reference to two *undated* letters to which he himself arbitrarily assigns dates.

As to the other core matter, the typewriter, Weinstein had among the papers he got from the FBI an inter-office FBI communication which ran as follows:

"WASHINGTON 7, NY2, AND CHICAGO 1 FROM PHILA. 5-17-49 DIRECTOR AND SAOS. URGENT
. . . CONCERNING WOODSTOCK TYPEWRITER SERIAL FIVE N TWO THREE NAUGHT NAUGHT NINE NINE, ALLEGEDLY THE TYPEWRITER FORMERLY OWNED BY THE HISS FAMILY, IT IS DESIRED TO POINT OUT . . . THAT THE DEFINITE POSSIBILITY EXISTS THIS TYPEWRITER IS NOT THE ONE RECEIVED BY PRISCILLA HISS FROM HER FATHER THOMAS FANSLER. . . ."

ONE OF THE POINTS made in Hiss's *coram nobis* petition which is currently before the courts is that the prosecution put forward a Woodstock machine as evidence, knowing full well that it was not the Hiss machine. Weinstein, in *Perjury*, spins out an elaborate construction of which the burden is that Hiss tried to keep the typewriter from being found; but as Julian Symons points out in *The Sunday Times* (2 July 1978), if Hiss did not want the typewriter found, all he had to do was toss it into the Potomac.

To conclude: *Perjury*, for all its mass of detail, is in essence a veins-standing-out-on-the-forehead effort to detoxify Whittaker Chambers. Professor Weinstein must at least be given credit for attempting the impossible.

Margaret Stern

London

Allen Weinstein Clarifies

THANK YOU for bringing to my attention the letters sent to your magazine by Margaret Stern and Eric Jacobs responding to Professor Sidney Hook's review of my book. Although I have no doubt that Professor Hook can correct the numerous errors of omission and commission in the two letters, most of which assume the existence of readers unfamiliar with the book, I thought that those interested in this controversy might wish some further information on a point raised by Margaret Stern, namely my refusal to allow Victor Navasky into my home on 30 April 1978 to examine my voluminous archive on the Hiss case. The episode has taken on near-mythic proportions among the friends of Alger Hiss, and a brief account of the background might prove interesting to readers of ENCOUNTER.

Mr Navasky published his initial critique of *Perjury* in the 8 April issue of *The Nation*, the magazine whose editorship he recently assumed. Navasky billed his review of my book as "an investigation", though he chose not to interview the person being "investigated", namely myself and my research, to check out my evidence at first hand before attacking *Perjury* in his article for purportedly conscious distortions of interview testimony and other material.

After publishing his "review", Navasky ridiculed my statement that he might have requested a response from the author—and also examined my evidence—*prior* to publishing his distorted and erroneous "investigation." He conceded that his chief sources for "facts" on the Hiss case included some of Alger Hiss's closest associates.

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Throughout the weeks that followed—in radio debates with me; in interviews with reporters from *Newsweek, The New York Times* and other publications; and in his own editorials in *The Nation*—Navasky continued to disparage the notion that he should have evaluated my documentation prior to 8 April, especially my information on the six people he interviewed who recanted statements they made previously to me. Nor did Navasky see the need to examine any of my additional new evidence that contradicted his *apologia* for Alger Hiss. In a sneering 22 April *Nation* editorial entitled "Waiting for Weinstein", he expressed irritation that I chose to reply in the more fair-minded journal of liberal opinion. *The New Republic*, rather than his own magazine:

> "Further, Mr Weinstein has made the peculiar point . . . that because I bothered to check out his sources, I was somehow obliged—unlike other reviewers—to get in touch with him. My own view is that such an interview would have been a *non sequitur*. The 674-page *Perjury* [*sic*] is amply footnoted and if the book's sources can't survive a minimal fact-check no amount of *ex parte* communication from the author can save it."

Shortly after this issue of *The Nation* appeared, *The New Republic* (at my request) sent Navasky an early copy of my "defence of *Perjury*" in its 29 April issue. His response was not long in coming. I received a phone call from Navasky stating that he had read my article and that I was obliged to show him all of my documentation *immediately* so that he, in turn, could respond to me in *The New Republic*. He asked to see it the following day. I pointed out that I was currently on leave from Smith College engaged in new research and in a promotion tour for the book. Weekends were reserved for my wife and children. He persisted, stressing my earlier offer to allow him access. The following day, I wired and wrote him. Although reluctant to sacrifice the only time I would have with my family that busy weekend, I offered him three hours the following Sunday morning (30 April) to view only those materials *he most urgently needed* for his *New Republic* response.

In our telephone conversation, Mr Navasky had asked to bring with him Alger Hiss's co-plaintiff, William Reuben, who had attacked me as (among other things) "ignorant and malevolent" while debating with me in joint radio appearances with Navasky. I said Mr Reuben was not welcome in my home but that Mr Navasky was free to bring along others from his *Nation* coterie. I feared this would become a fishing expedition through my massive archive and asked Mr Navasky to limit his requests, pointing out that other scholars and journalists had been denied such an opportunity because I did not have the time or facilities to accommodate them.

I RETURNED HOME to find various letters and telegrams from Navasky. He also had sent, at my request, the galley proofs for a long editorial-article from the forthcoming *Nation*, a piece filled with additional invective against me, this before Navasky had even examined my files. In one of his wires, Navasky proposed that a lawyer for Hiss accompany him on grounds that the lawyer had

"Faith-Tendencies"

LAST YEAR, *General Jean-Louis Jeanmaire of Switzerland was convicted for passing secret documents to the Soviet KGB. The personal aide to the former West German chancellor, Willy Brandt, was uncovered in 1974 as a Soviet agent; a secretary in the office of West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was caught red-handed. A high-ranking Swedish general was jailed a few years ago after being convicted of handing over military secrets to the Russians. One could list many more Soviet spies.*

Why, then, has Mr Alger Hiss managed to get a mixed verdict in American public opinion? Perhaps because Hiss symbolized for some members of his generation (he is now 74) the fight against fascism, against economic depression, the brave New Dealer, the clean liberal who was victimized by unconscionable red-baiters, led by the then Congressman Richard M. Nixon. ("Mutato nomine." *wrote Horace,* "de te fabula narratur"—*change the name, and the story is about you.) Perhaps Hiss adherents exemplify what William James called "faith-tendencies which are extremely active psychological forces, constantly outstripping evidence." James even set up a model of what he called the "faith-ladder" with seven rungs:*

> **"There is nothing absurd in a certain view of the world being true, nothing self-contradictory; it might have been true under certain conditions; it may be true, even now; it is fit to be true; it ought to be true; it must be true; it shall be true, at any rate for me."**

Whatever the reasons for the Hiss "comeback" (Allen Weinstein theorizes that Watergate and Mr Nixon's abdication triggered it) the record cannot be expunged. Even the decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, which in 1975 readmitted Mr Hiss to the Massachusetts bar, the only U.S. lawyer ever readmitted following a felony conviction, was accompanied by a statement from the presiding justice that:

> **"nothing we have said here should be construed as detracting one iota from the fact that in considering Hiss's petition we consider him to be guilty as charged."**

Arnold Beichman
in *The Winnipeg Free Press*

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also been a long-time *Nation* contributor, though a later message mentioned other subalterns. In any case, his letter and telegraphed addenda were preposterous: they listed so many and such broad requests for information from my files that I would have been busy for days filling them. Moreover, his forthcoming screed in *The Nation* ridiculed once again the *"non sequitur"* of reading my files—at the very moment its author was dispatching huge shopping lists for them—and he even had the temerity to accuse me of being a dishonest scholar.

Readers must judge for themselves how they might have responded under the circumstances. For myself, the situation posed no difficulty. Navasky having thus violated the conditions I set for his special, limited, and preferential access to my research files, and given both the scurrilous tone of his attacks and the fact that he deemed it unnecessary to delay them until he had inspected my evidence, my wife and I decided that Navasky would not be allowed into our home. I wired him that Saturday evening, therefore, both at *The Nation*'s offices and at his Manhattan home, informing him that the meeting was cancelled. Western Union confirmed the dispatch and the receipt of the wire.

Nevertheless, the following morning Navasky and two associates appeared on my doorstep in Washington demanding entry. My wife answered the door and told Navasky that the meeting had been cancelled by telegram the previous evening. Navasky did not register surprise at this news but, rather, urged her to ask me to reconsider and to allow them in. She declined but expressed our apologies for his unnecessary trip, assuming still that he had somehow not received one or another telegram. In subsequent issues of *The Nation, The Village Voice,* and a few other publications, Navasky and his friends chronicled the episode with familiar inaccuracy. Doubtless Margaret Stern derived her account of the incident from one of those sources.

NAVASKY RETURNED to the subject of my book in the 17 June issue of his magazine, printing 8 letters devoted to attacks on *Perjury* and to *ad hominem* assaults on its author. Two letters defending the book found their way into this letters round-up, though Navasky found it impossible to keep his hands off those, appending derisive commentaries. One of the two writers, Hope Hale Davis, provided further confirmation (if any were needed) of the existence of a Communist underground espionage network in Washington during the 1930s, a fact Navasky had challenged in his previous articles [see box, p. 87]. Navasky found no space available to reprint other letters he had received which defended my book, copies of which the writers had sent to me. As for the merits of our dispute on the evidence in the Hiss-Chambers case, readers can judge best for themselves by consulting the appropriate issues of *The Nation* and my response in the 29 April *New Republic*. I commend the latter piece especially to Margaret Stern and Eric Jacobs, in lieu of a more careful reading of *Perjury* itself than that indicated by their letters.

Allen Weinstein

Smith College
Northampton, Mass.
USA

"A Tale of Mystery—and Detection"

A Reply by Sidney Hook

THE ANSWERS to most of the questions raised by Mr Jacobs and Ms Stern are to be found in Allen Weinstein's book. Here I wish to deal with some special aspects of the points they raise.

(1) Mr Jacobs asserts that "what makes Hiss guilty is the verdict of the court, not the verdict of Weinstein's book nor your support of it." The verdict of a court determines only legal guilt. The more important question is one of actual guilt or innocence. The innocent are sometimes convicted; more often the guilty go free. When Judith Coplon was freed by the Federal Second Circuit Court, Judge Frank observed that "the evidence of her guilt is plain" but since the arresting officer had failed to procure a search warrant, the evidence was ruled inadmissible and the case against her dismissed. If Mr Jacobs is referring only to legal guilt, then since Hiss has already been legally convicted, and the conviction has withstood repeated appeals to the higher courts, why is Mr Jacobs contesting his guilt?

(2) Both Mr Jacobs and Ms Stern are in error about the character of the *coram nobis* petition. It can establish neither Hiss' *actual* guilt or innocence nor his *legal* guilt or innocence. No evaluation of the evidence is called for in the petition. Hiss contends that the prosecution did not make available to him all the relevant material in its possession. Even

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if true this has *no* necessary bearing on the question of his actual guilt or innocence. At most it would establish that despite the declaration of Hiss' lawyer that Hiss received a fair trial, in some respects he did not. But this has never been proved.

(3) Despite Ms Stern's insinuations to the contrary, the inter-office FBI memo (which *she* regards as proof that the prosecution entered the Woodstock machine as evidence aware that it was not the Hiss machine) is cited and discussed by Weinstein on p. 407 *ff* of his book in great detail. Ms Stern is apparently relying on the reader's ignorance of the text.

The memo was the text of a telegram to J. Edgar Hoover warning that the Woodstock typewriter which Hiss' lawyers had found (after repeated declarations by Alger and Priscilla Hiss that it had been destroyed or given away) might be an attempt to palm off a phony machine. That such might be the case expressed a legitimate doubt which any investigator who was smarting from Hoover's whiplash criticism for failure to locate it could entertain, after the Hisses' assurances that they had no knowledge of the machine's whereabouts.

The significant evidential fact, ignored by both Ms Stern and Mr Jacobs, was not this possibility but the actuality that the type-face of the characters in Mrs Hiss' letters, which were used as standards of comparison, was *identical* with the type-face of the characters in the typewritten copies of purloined classified State Department documents. Both the FBI examiners as well as Hiss' own experts agree that they were *all* typed on the *same* machine. And that machine turned out to be this Woodstock.

(4) Ms Stern makes light of Professor Weinstein's labours and taxes him with having rushed his botched job of a book into print in fear that Hiss' *coram nobis* petition, if granted, would destroy the market for his book. This is sheer fantasy. The truth is that Hiss kept on postponing going into court with his petition, first announced in October 1977, then in November 1977, then in April 1978. Hiss waited for Weinstein's book to appear before filing his petition in order to determine how compromising the outcome of Weinstein's research would be. Whatever the decision of the court on the petition, it will have no more bearing on the validity and topicality of Weinstein's research than the bizarre decision to readmit Hiss to the Massachusetts bar.

(5) Both Ms Stern and Mr Jacobs make much of the different dates Chambers gave on his break with the Communist Party. They apparently are not satisfied with the explanation I offered, based on familiarity with many cases, that breaking with the Communist Party is *a process*, painful and often long drawn out. It does not suddenly occur overnight, particularly when one is doing secret work. Ms Stern alleges that Chambers "changed his story" of breaking not in 1937 but in 1938 only *after* "he came into Court with State Department papers he claimed to have got from Hiss." And as if they had consulted each other, Mr Jacobs writes: "Only after he [Chambers] had produced the copies of State Department papers which he claimed Hiss had retyped . . . did he finally fix on April 1938 as the month he quit the party." They are both mistaken. In his testimony prior to the production of the documents which incriminated Hiss, Chambers mentioned 1938 almost as often as 1937, e.g., on 25 August 1948 (pp. 1176 and 1178 of the record). Long before he produced the Baltimore documents, he several times fixed his break date in 1938.

ACTUALLY I HAPPEN TO KNOW a great deal about Chambers' defection and have told the story in some detail in ENCOUNTER ("The Strange Case of Whittaker Chambers", January 1976). At the end of 1937 I learned from Professor Meyer Schapiro (with whom Chambers had remained in contact after he went underground) that he was getting fed up with the Stalinist movement. I communicated that information to Herbert Solow, another former Columbia classmate of Chambers, whose papers authenticate the date. Solow attempted, in vain, to get in touch with Chambers who after some time learned of his efforts. Early in 1938 Chambers visited Solow and indicated his strong desire to come up from the underground and resume a public face and character. He requested Solow to arrange (through me) a meeting with John Dewey, who had not long before returned from Mexico where he had chaired the "Commission of Inquiry into the Truth of the Moscow Trials." Chambers wanted to tell his story to John Dewey in order to get protection from the avenging arm of the *NKVD* that the attendant publicity might give him. At the outset I was sceptical, and reluctant to bring Dewey into the affair and insisted on certain conditions described in my ENCOUNTER article. All this took place over a period of months. There was no *exact* moment when Chambers "broke" with the Communist Party. If one seeks the point at which the Party underground apparatus was informed of Chambers' defection—a point from which there was no turning back—then it was the day when he went into hiding in mid-April 1938.

(6) As I pointed out in my review, despite Weinstein's magnificent research and interesting findings, "the logic of the evidence introduced at the trials was more than sufficient to establish Hiss' guilt beyond a reasonable doubt." Ms Stern protests that those who believe Hiss guilty do not state what the core of the matter is in contrast to what is peripheral. The core consists of: memoranda in Hiss' own handwriting of highly classified documents and typed and microfilmed

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copies of other classified material; the transfer of title of Hiss' car to a Communist Party agent; the loan of money to Chambers and the free use of his apartment and car (to a total stranger!); the receipt of a valuable rug (a gift from an allegedly penniless dead-beat)—one of four purchased by Professor Schapiro at Chambers' behest, not to speak of the prolonged rigmarole Hiss resorted to in denying that he ever knew Chambers. Ms Stern would do well to read the analysis of this evidence by Judge Irving Younger (*Commentary*, August 1975).

(7) Mr Jacobs finds nothing amiss in Hiss telling his counsel John F. Davis (on 7 December 1948) that he remembered giving the old typewriter, which was being sought high and low, to Pat Catlett and (*a*) refusing to tell the FBI when questioned about it; (*b*) informing the Grand Jury on three separate occasions between 10 December and 15 December that he had no knowledge whatsoever of what happened to it; and (*c*) not mentioning, when asked whether he had given gifts to persons other than his family, the gift of the Woodstock to the son of Claudia Catlett. Asked several times by a juror whether the machine had been sold or thrown away, Hiss replied: "*I have not any recollection of its disposition at all.*" Why, then, did he mention it to Davis? One can think of many reasons. "He may have felt it best that Davis, who worked closely with Donald Hiss in his investigations, check on its whereabouts, if only to locate the typewriter before the FBI." It may have been a slip or a wild hope that, as he told the FBI on 4 December, the machine was possibly an Underwood. But what he distinctly remembered on

In "the Underground"

AS ONE WHO WAS *a member of the Communist underground in Washington from mid-1934 to early 1937, I find some of Victor Navasky's quoted contradictions of statements from interviews by Allen Weinstein in* Perjury *rather perplexing. I have known personally a number of the people whose denials Navasky quotes. I would not expect one of them, if confronted with a statement published in a context unfavourable to them, to give an honest, unprevaricating response. But the case of Katherine Perlo's letter to President Roosevelt was even more puzzling. Navasky derides Weinstein as follows:*

> *"The Washington 'underground Communist group', headed by Victor Perlo, was 'confirmed' when 'Katherine Wills Perlo wrote an anonymous letter to the White House in 1944'."*

Here Navasky seems to be doing something strange—suggesting that Weinstein needed Mrs Perlo's letter to prove the existence of the underground, and that anything shaky about the letter should shake any right-thinking reader's belief that there ever had been a Washington Communist underground. He proceeds then to find the letter shaky because Mrs Perlo was under the care of a psychiatrist, and because she added the psychiatrist's name to those of her husband and others she accused of a Communist conspiracy.

I HAVE **no information about Mrs Perlo's psychiatrist. For all I know, he could have been a Communist. Such a choice, if made by a comrade, would have been natural. But about Victor Perlo himself and his underground activities there can be no doubt. I attended a unit meeting (we did not use the term "cell") once a week for more than two years, and Vic was present surely at more than seventy of them. He was my first unit leader; how well I remember him kneeling one night drawing a map of China with different colours of chalk on a child's blackboard, while giving us a progress report on the territory gained by Chu-Teh, Chou En-lai, and Mao Tse-tung.**

I am not sure whether Katherine Wills Perlo is the wife I knew. If she is, the marriage has an interesting history. Vic was only 22 when I first met him in 1934. He had been a mathematical prodigy, and was brilliant at his job in the New Deal. But his development had been one-sided. The more sophisticated comrades called him "socially immature," and a campaign was launched to help him try, as the rest of us were doing, according to Party directives, to play the role of a proper bourgeois adult. Always an earnest and literal-minded adherent to Party decisions, Vic promptly appeared, within weeks, proudly leading a blonde bride. He established her in a little country house and even produced a baby. Vic's wife never seemed a "natural" as a Communist, and I am not surprised, if this Mrs Perlo is the same woman, that she became fed up with the Party and its demands.

BUT WHOEVER SHE WAS, *whatever her mental condition in 1944, however she phrased her accusation, it is too late in the day to use her to negate the existence of the Washington underground. The Washington underground not only existed but was used, to my knowledge, for stealing documents from Government agencies. I myself carried out such an assignment, admittedly a harmless one for I had no access to secret information, but performed by means of a stealthy, illicit entry and the rifling of an official's files, "for practice." But my husband, whose breakdown and death may have been due to the conflicts caused by his conspiratorial activities, was leader of one of the most productive of the five-member units that made up our part of Hal Ware's group. He himself regularly went to the New York waterfront to give a Party contact confidential information from his job in the shipping division of the labour board of NRA, later of the National Labour Relations Board. Everyone in Hal Ware's group had accepted the directive to get whatever we could for the Party to use in any way it saw fit.*

Hope Hale Davis

(Letter to *The Nation*, New York)

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7 December he could not have forgotten so completely three days later.

Ms Stern finds reasonable Mr Symons' absurd suggestion that "if Hiss did not want the typewriter found, all he had to do was toss it into the Potomac." For one thing, Hiss did *not* have the typewriter in his possession at the time. For another, he had to assume that his actions were under surveillance by the FBI. Had he retrieved and destroyed the typewriter, the persons from whom he got it could have revealed the fact—even the persistent lying of the loyal Catletts, his former servants, had limits. A failed attempt to retrieve or destroy it might well have finished him. One could more reasonably ask: "Why didn't Hiss destroy the typewriter ten years earlier, immediately after Chambers defected?" Answer: because he didn't know what Chambers had secreted away.

(8) In this connection Mr Jacobs refers to his "humdrum obsession" that Hiss could not have been guilty of espionage because if he was "why should [Hiss] have chosen the clumsy and time-consuming espionage technique of taking documents home and retyping them at night. There must have been easier ways even in the 1930s. . . ." Mr Jacobs can cure himself of his obsession by reading Professor Weinstein's book, or re-reading it with greater care and less incredulity. The original classified documents that Hiss took home with him had to be returned the next morning. Otherwise their absence would have been discovered. Chambers picked them up, had them photographed, and returned them to Hiss the same night. But because of his other assignments Chambers could not call for the documents every night. On the nights Chambers could not call, Hiss made typewritten copies of the documents he was able to purloin that day, returned the originals the next morning, and turned over the accumulated typed copies to Chambers when he appeared. The typed copies were photographed by Felix Inslerman—an agent who confirmed Chambers' testimony—and returned to Chambers who destroyed them. Hiss also made handwritten summaries of classified documents that were only briefly in his possession and gave them to Chambers. All perfectly simple—very efficient—and no one the wiser. Apparently both Wadleigh and Reno—both confessed espionage agents—also used the same techniques. Had Chambers not preserved the materials as "*a life preserver*", when he was getting ready to break, all this would have been dismissed as "hearsay."

According to Herbert Solow it was he who suggested to Chambers that he take out this kind of "life insurance." My own advice transmitted through Solow, after my initial suspicions were allayed that Chambers was attempting to discredit (on the Kremlin's orders) the Dewey Commission, was that Chambers write down everything he knew about Communist espionage activities and personnel, make a copy and send it to Earl Browder, head of the American Communist Party, informing him that the original would be made public if anything befell Chambers or members of his family. (According to Professor Weinstein, Chambers deposited papers with the journalist Ludwig Lore who knew the kind of work Chambers was engaged in. But when Lore's safe-deposit vault was opened, it was empty.)

(9) Professor Weinstein has dealt with Paul Willert's denials in his *New Republic* rejoinder to Navasky (29 April 1978). Willert denies that he was a Communist—which Weinstein never asserted. Nor in the actual text of chapter IX, which treats of Chambers' defection, did he characterise Willert as "a Soviet agent." He wrote that during the 1930s, after Hitler came to power, Willert had engaged in "secret work for the underground *German* Communist Party performing courier missions inside Germany" (p. 313). This is perfectly compatible with Willert's present account of his role in Germany.[1] Although Willert denies having warned Chambers that Otto Katz was looking for him, Weinstein cites from a letter written by Chambers to Professor Schapiro in 1938: "I feel I should be grateful to P.W. [Paul Willert is identified elsewhere in the letter] for what amounts to a warning, and what he must have intended as such. . . ." Weinstein also quotes from a memo in the Hiss defence files (dated 28 August 1951) of a lawyer's conversation with Dr Martin Gumpert, the author of the book Willert had requested Chambers to translate. "Dr. Gumpert has told me that he has a vivid recollection of Willert's telling him that he could not meet the second translator [Chambers] as he was hiding from the OGPU."

Concerning Otto Katz, a letter from Willert's wife to Malcolm Cowley (20 April 1942) indicates that Willert was aware that Katz was something more than a fund-raiser for Loyalist Spanish refugees. As is now well known, he was doing a hatchet-job on Gustav Regler who had defected from Stalinism.

Mr Jacobs seems to believe that Otto Katz's sad fate—and his bizarre confession, before he was hanged, that he was a British intelligence agent recruited by Willert in some way invalidates

[1] However Professor Weinstein must be faulted for carelessness in his Introduction in which he identifies and characterises the scores of persons whom he interviewed in the course of his research. He refers (p. xviii) to "the revelations of five participants in Soviet intelligence work in the United States and Europe during the 1930's—Joszef Peters, Nadya Ulanovskaya, Maxim Lieber, Paul Willert and Hede Massing. . . ." When he goes on to particularise their work, he mentions Willert as someone "who performed anti-Nazi courier work for the German CP during the same period (before becoming a British agent in the Second World War)." This does not make Willert a participant in Soviet intelligence work. He should not have been listed as such.

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Weinstein's account. "Is it likely", he asks, "that the Communists would put such a confession into Katz's mouth if Willert really had been a Soviet agent?" But Weinstein in his account of Willert's dealings with Chambers did not say that Willert was a Soviet agent. Katz was uttering a carefully rehearsed falsehood. However, Mr Jacobs seems to be naive or ignorant about the techniques of Communist show-trials and the lengths to which their organisers are prepared to go. Even if Paul Willert had been a Soviet agent—and there is no evidence that he was—judging by what other defendants at Communist show-trials have been made to confess, it would not be surprising at all for him to have been thrown to the dogs if he had uttered a critical word about the Kremlin. And, according to Chambers, he had uttered more than one. Otto Katz's trial and the techniques employed to elicit confessions are described in gruesome detail by one of the co-defendants, Eugen Loebl, in his remarkable book *My Mind on Trial* (1976).

(*10*) Mr Jacobs is sceptical that Chambers had reason to fear for his life. "Is there any evidence of a real threat", he writes, "other than Chambers's own word?" What kind of evidence would Mr Jacobs accept? Chambers' corpse, like Krivitsky's? or a would-be assassin caught in the act? or an engraved warning from the Kremlin? Either Mr Jacobs does not believe that Chambers was a defector from the Soviet espionage underground, or he abuses his right to be ignorant. I doubt whether he is really ignorant of the fact (testified to by some famous corpses and disappearances) that there is no easy resignation from this kind of service, and absolutely no forgiveness for betrayal.

However, Allen Weinstein's book which Mr Jacobs professes to have read does contain some evidence "other than Chambers's own word" that he was in danger. An FBI memo reports that Reuben Shemitz (a New York attorney and Chambers' brother-in-law) reports a telephone conversation with a woman, shortly after Chambers broke, "who stated that if Shemitz would inform her of the whereabouts of Chambers she would see to it that Chambers' wife and two children would have no harm done to them." The woman indicated "it was a matter of life and death." Together with other details this incident is described on p. 315.

(*11*) The hullabaloo about Sam Krieger not being the "Clarence Miller" of Gastonia fame but another "Clarence Miller"—a party pseudonym—is a genuine red herring. Weinstein nowhere asserted that *Krieger* told him he was the Gastonia Clarence Miller. He learned this "fact" from FBI documents, and inferred it from reports of others. To anyone familiar with the Gastonia story (and the Communist glorification of the martyrs of that hard-fought strike in the terrorised company town), the reference to the Clarence Miller who foolishly fled bail with the approval of the Communist Party leadership as "an escaped murderer" is enough to turn one's stomach. There were good grounds for the error of identification—if error it turns out to be. But despite Ms Stern's disbelief, who the true Clarence Miller is has *no* bearing on any crucial feature of the Hiss case—comparable, say, to the fact that the interlinear handwritten notes on the Baltimore documents were identified by Hiss' own experts as probably being in Hiss' own hand. This is far more significant than the make of typewriter used.

FINALLY, (*12*) Ms Stern's implication that Chambers was not a member of the Ware group on the basis of one line that may have been an incomplete sentence[2] in an interrogation that lasted for days indicates that she (as well as Eric Jacobs) is ignoring the actual contents of the book. For Professor Weinstein's indisputable merit is to have authenticated *beyond any reasonable doubt* Chambers' role in the Communist espionage ring, and his membership in the Ware group. The evidence of Nadezhda Ulanovskaya, a former leading Soviet

[2] It seems to me from the context of the questions asked Chambers by members of HUAC that his answer to Congressman Rankin's query: "What was his [Harold Ware's] real name?" actually was: "Harold Ware. I never knew him under any other name." Chambers was answering many detailed questions about Ware. He could not have claimed so much knowledge about him, or subsequently that he was first introduced to Hiss by Harold Ware, if he literally "never knew him." Chambers recalls that "the meeting took place in Washington and I believe in a restaurant. I then continued to know Mr Hiss until I broke with the Communist Party in early 1938 [*sic!*], and I saw him once again towards the end of 1938."

In consequence of Victor Navasky's attempt to discredit Professor Weinstein's research another witness, hitherto unknown, has surfaced, to confirm the existence and function of the Ware group. In a letter protesting against Navasky's attack on Weinstein, Mrs Hope Hale Davis writes that

> "The Washington underground not only existed but was used, to my knowledge, for stealing documents from Government agencies. I myself carried out such an assignment . . . But my husband, whose breakdown and death may have been due to the conflicts caused by his conspiratorial activities, was leader of one of the most productive of the five-member units that made up our part of Hal Ware's group."
>
> (*The Nation*, June 17, 1978)

Mr Navasky is frankly sceptical but adds a final comment that reveals how desperate is the necessity of Hiss' partisans to impugn Weinstein's scholarship. "If Davis is accurate in her memory, however, she has provided further evidence of *Perjury*'s carelessness, for Weinstein neglected to include her name along with others he listed as members of the Perlo and Ware group."

How could Weinstein have known of Mrs Davis? Navasky fails to explain. She was never named or identified by anyone. There must be others like her who would have testified to the truth long ago had they not feared the onslaught of the Navaskys of this world. If Mrs Davis' memory is accurate, it confirms Chambers' testimony and strengthens Professor Weinstein's analysis, for she has supplied independent evidence.

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agent in the United States, is altogether convincing about Chambers (she did not know Hiss). Even more weighty is the testimony of Josephine Herbst (the novelist, and a fervent convert to Communism, whose husband, John Hermann, was a member of the Ware group). Ms Herbst's letter to her husband in which she retails what she told the FBI to shield him is reproduced on p. 137. Weinstein also reproduces from the Hiss defence files the key paragraphs from Herbst's three interviews with Hiss' lawyers which identify "Carl" (Chambers), Hiss, and her husband as members of the Ware group. Unaware of Chambers' connection with the Soviet Army's Fourth Branch, she says of the Ware cell: "This was a group of people holding small and unimportant positions in various branches of the Government and was organised for the purpose of collecting information for the use primarily of the Communist Party in New York City. . . ."

It is significant that neither Ms Stern nor Mr Jacobs makes any attempt to come to grips with the actual evidence, cited in *Perjury* and in my review, of Hiss' guilt—notably the handwritten memoir of Hiss about the Robinson-Rubens case, for which no plausible explanation has ever been offered by the defence. The cumulative weight of the evidence is unaffected by their carping irrelevancies. Ms Stern is apparently unable to distinguish between *calling* a person a Communist and publicly identifying him or her under oath as a member of the Communist Party by someone who has been a member. That Bernard Baruch told his life-long friend, James Byrnes, that Hiss was a Communist may be true. That did not make him one. That this characterisation which, if uttered, was an epithet of abuse rather than of description, led to Hiss' exposure and undoing is an unwarranted surmise. Byrnes may have passed Baruch's remark along to the FBI; but if he himself believed it, how can Ms Stern explain why, as Secretary of State, he kept Hiss on in the State Department despite the mounting barrage of charges against Hiss that preceded and followed the 1945 testimony of Igor Gouzenko and Elizabeth Bentley which seemed to implicate Hiss? Gouzenko had told Canadian security officials (according to an FBI memorandum) "that he had been informed by Lieutenant Kulakov in the office of the Soviet military attaché that the Soviets had an agent in the United States in May 1945 who was an assistant to the then Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius. . . ." Even then no official action was taken against Hiss. For political reasons he was eased out of the State Department to avoid a scandal. (The full story is told in Chapter X of *Perjury*.)

THE ATTACKS ON Professor Weinstein's book by Hiss' partisans on both sides of the Atlantic have failed to shake any substantial item in the formidable case against Hiss. They are really designed as diversions, to raise a blinding dust in order to lead readers to throw up their hands in bewilderment at the charges and counter-charges, and above all to discourage them from reading Weinstein's book. The hope is that if people get fed up with the case, they will become indifferent to the evidence.

I do not believe this tactic will succeed. I am confident that any politically unprejudiced reader who peruses Weinstein's book will not only find it more absorbing than most tales of mystery and detection but on the basis of the material evidence will reach the same conclusion concerning the guilt of Alger Hiss.

You Receive Letters

You receive letters with stamps
on which a country is depicted like a flag
fluttering in the wind

the white corpse of the letter folds and unfolds its hands
the white dove of the letter folds and unfolds its wings
while the wind fluttering against the banners
while the wind tangled in the banners

behaves in conformity with its nature
and changes nothing

Ryszard Krynicki

Translated by Adam Czerniawski

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LETTERS

Koestler's Reply

A DETAILED REPLY to Professor Stephen Toulmin's article, "Arthur Koestler's Theodicy" (February), would require a special issue of ENCOUNTER. It would make monotonous reading, because virtually every paragraph would start with:

"Toulmin said that I said that. . . . But in fact I did not say that. What I said was: . . . ."

And so on. It seems therefore simpler to refer the interested reader to the book itself, which your reviewer purported to review.

ARTHUR KOESTLER

London

Nuremberg Reconsidered

MR J. W. BRUEGEL (Letters, January) has a very weak grip on my point. He admits that the presence of a Soviet "judge", personally implicated in many a frame-up and appointed by a government as responsible as the accused for many of the crimes alleged against them, was unfortunate—but nevertheless politically unavoidable. True, but how then can it be argued that the *judicial* nature of the Nuremberg Trial was not thereby hopelessly compromised?

Since the charges against the accused, for example of "aggressive war" for which the USSR had equally been expelled from the League of Nations six years earlier, were thereby invalidated, of course it would have been better not to have gone through with the rigmarole. Courts martial could at least have restricted themselves to straightforward crimes like the killing of prisoners: (nor need such courts have necessarily been international, since any given state in which, or within the military competence of which, atrocities had taken place could have formed its own tribunal for those in its power).

Mr Bruegel does not seem to have read Professor D. C. Watt's original article ["Nuremberg Reconsidered", ENCOUNTER, May 1978]. Naturally one would not have wished Goering or Streicher to have gone unkilled—in those days one would have killed them oneself; one was a walking arsenal of lethal stuff. But it seems clear that Streicher, for instance, was among those accused hardly even for political reasons—rather for media reasons, things he'd said, stances he'd taken, vicious oratory and writing, rather than crimes like those of the Auschwitz-organisers. Declaration as outlaws, straight revenge, would have been better than this affectation of judicial—even of "Western", justice.

And so Mr Bruegel's remarks about British qualms on the Katyn accusation prove. If, as he says, the majority of the judges did not believe the accused guilty on this matter, then—if they were a court of justice—they should have found them innocent. "The conditions then prevailing" which prevented this were entirely political—the "impossibility" of offending the Soviet Union, the true guilty party.

MAY I ADD THAT it is easy for us now to point out the defects of the whole procedure, but that there were men who saw it at the time—in particular, and even before the trial commenced, Professor Sidney Hook *(New Leader,* 1 November, 1945), and other New York Jews, whose concern for law and objectivity must be among the highest ever recorded. There were a few (a very few) even then who attacked them as "apologists" for the Nazis! Now, surely, all of us must feel humble in their presence.

ROBERT CONQUEST

Stanford
California

The Webbs' "Pilgrimage"

IF Professor George Feaver [ENCOUNTER, Letters, September 1981] wants to go on arguing about the Webbs, he should study his texts more closely.

I did not say—or even imply—that the Webbs were racialist in today's sense of the word. In fact, as long ago as the Boer War Beatrice Webb noted in her *Diary* that neither side, in the argument about the rights and the wrongs of the war, seemed to be at all concerned with the interests of the majority of the inhabitants of South Africa—the Kaffirs. Those who supported the war were anxious that the gold-seeking immigrants, the *Uitlanders*, should not be harshly treated by the resident Afrikaners; those who were against found themselves supporting that nationalist bully, Oom Paul Kruger; and the South African dilemma of the present day derives in large part from the fact that neither the Treaty of Vereeniging nor the subsequent recognition, by the Liberal Government, of the South African republic, showed any concern with native rights.

Of course the Webbs were élitist—though less so than Bernard Shaw. In common with very many other intellectuals of that date, they believed that an intellectual grasp of realities, which was not possessed by the bulk of the electorate, was essential for any person or group seeking to lead it. Their error was to underestimate the power of emotion in political life—the results of general elections nearly always took them by surprise—and to choose their intellectuals badly. They picked, *inter alia*, Rosebery and Haldane, and could never get on terms with either Asquith or Lloyd George. Hence their influence was less than it might have been.

As to their world travels, whatever the recipients might have thought, neither Sidney nor Beatrice attached great importance to their findings; and those interested will find proof of that in the *Diaries*. They disliked the ethos of the United States, hated Chicago, Pittsburgh, etc., and did not feel really at ease until they reached Salt Lake City and later Honolulu. Their judgment of leading Americans was as faulty as was theirs of English politicians.

I have disagreed elsewhere with Professor Norman MacKenzie's description of the whole of the period after the failure of "permeation" in the anti-Poor Law campaign. They then cut their losses and decided to work through the Labour Party—"a poor thing but our own", as Beatrice put it. And Sidney's record on the Sankey

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Coal Commission, his drafting of the manifesto entitled *Labour and the New Social Order*, and his overwhelming victory in the Parliamentary contest for Seaham Harbour show how great an impression they made immediately. It was not until the second Labour Government had perished ignominiously, with Sidney patently failing to solve the Palestinian problem, that the Webbs began to despair of the Labour Party and to look rather towards Soviet Russia, which they had earlier criticised so sharply.

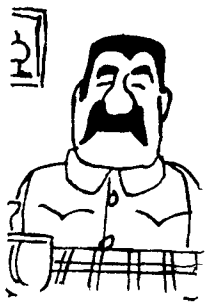
And it was then that their Pilgrimage began.

MARGARET COLE

La Paz, Bolivia

Isaac Deutscher's "Stalin"

An Exchange between Donald Tyerman & Leopold Labedz



WHAT an original (but, if you think about it bloodily appropriate) way of celebrating the 25th anniversary of Stalin's death by getting a second-hand contributor to stab a dead man in the back! For, according to Mr Labedz's own account [ENCOUNTER, January], he did not dare to publish this renewed attack while Isaac Deutscher was still alive.

I am not an expert in these matters, and I did not share either Deutscher's interpretation of history or his political beliefs. But I did know him better than most men, now alive or dead, and I read the typescript of all his biographies. As an editor once myself, I can see that Mr Labedz's resuscitated assassination of him is tediously long in affirmation and denunciation and significantly short in evidence (even though you print it under the flattering heading of "DOCUMENT").

This is no scholarly critique of the considerable corpus of Deutscher's work on Stalin's Russia. It is, as the lawyers warned him in 1962, another selective piece in Mr Labedz's "deliberate campaign to destroy Deutscher's reputation."

I am concerned here, however, with Deutscher rather than with Mr Labedz. To suggest now that Deutscher wrote, whether about Stalin or about Trotsky, simply as a propagandist or advocate twisting (or inverting) the facts in order to prove his theories or bolster his ego is preposterously untrue. I must say again, eleven years on, what I said of Isaac Deutscher at his funeral:

> "When he still saw in the use of communism, as distinct from its monstrous abuse by Stalin and others, the best hope for just societies, for culture and fairness and the free future of human beings, his critics said that he was either deluding himself or deliberately deluding other people. But Isaac Deutscher was neither a fool nor a knave. We all know that. He was a good man and a lifelong student, for ever pursuing the truth as he discerned it, and caring for the same human values as the best men have always done. True he was an optimist—perhaps a romantic as well as a realist. But time alone, as I say, will settle the argument between him and those who disagree with his premisses or his conclusions. The answer, I fancy, will be a mixed one. But no time at all is needed to vouch for his integrity, his learning, and his humanity."

That was the man Mr Labedz was traducing when he wrote his "study", which you now so deliberately revive.

Westleton
Suffolk

DONALD TYERMAN

A Reply by Leopold Labedz

I AM SURPRISED—and every ENCOUNTER reader will have his own measure of astonishment—at Mr Tyerman's extraordinary notion of intellectual immunity. When can an author be subjected to rigorous critical analysis? When alive, he is evidently justified in restraining his critics with threats of legal action; and when dead he is still protected by loyal old friends who will not tolerate, even after 11 years, any disruption of the respectful funereal hush. When, then, is the free debate in a democratic culture supposed to take place? Presumably never, so far as Mr Tyerman's late collaborator Isaac Deutscher is concerned.

For it was Mr Tyerman who, when he was Editor of *The Economist*, made Deutscher his leading contributor on Soviet affairs. I am afraid that it was only under his successors that this prestigious weekly recovered a more sober posture on the "Russian question."

It is no longer "good Uncle Joe" press time. Even the French *progressistes* have by now discovered the Gulag Archipelago. Today, Deutscher's moral ambiguities and ideological casuistries can be seen in clear perspective, and surely his biographical works, which are still read in paperback editions, can be approached more critically. What is inappropriate (or "bloodily appropriate") in having a close look at his *Stalin* 30 years after its appearance and 25 years after Stalin's death? What a grotesque moratorium Mr Tyerman would like to put on the very life of the mind: evaluation, discussion, argument!

An understanding of the reality of Vorkuta and Kolyma (and after Khrushchev and Solzhenitsyn the terrible facts are by now admitted) is as necessary for the survival of the non-totalitarian world as grasping the past horrors of Auschwitz and Belsen. But throughout the 1930s, '40s and '50s, such truths were difficult to convey. This was due not only to the Soviet propaganda machine and its fellow-travellers, but also to all those "honourable men", respectable Western journalists who, although

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they knew better, chose to one degree or another to obfuscate realities.

V. S. Pritchett, once writing about Arthur Koestler, noted that "he has had to combat the English unwillingness to face the appalling facts of medieval atrocity on the Continent." But it was not merely English; the unwillingness was, alas, far more general. Deutscher (who denounced Koestler's "uneasy conscience") did not combat this unwillingness. We had to wait for a Solzhenitsyn to overcome it. Now, ironically, Mr Tyerman, who provided Deutscher with his first great platform to rationalize Stalinism, is angry because my old essay in which I juxtapose and contrast Deutscher and Solzhenitsyn has at last seen the light of day.

"Assassination"? "Stabbing a dead man in the back?" The metaphors are, I must say, despicable; for what is precisely at issue is the moral attitude toward real crimes. The prisoners of war at Katyn had real bullets in the back of their skulls—and it was Deutscher who beclouded Stalin's responsibility for this and other horrific deeds. Mr Tyerman may be generously inclined to overlook his old friend's peccadilloes; but in this, or in any other case, thank God he has no right or power to grant immunities or indulgences to apologists of 20th-century evils.

MAY I TAKE just a few extra lines to explain some additional points which Mr Tyerman, in his emotionality, neglects?

I DID INDEED happen to think that Deutscher was deluding himself (and others) in seeing Communism, in whatever form, as "the best hope for just societies, for culture and fairness and the free future of human beings . . . ." It is precisely this attitude which made him such a bad guide to Communist realities. The last 25 years have demonstrated this and I provided reasons for this opinion in the two parts of my article, the first of which appeared in 1962. I concluded it by saying that he

> "takes himself too seriously as an analyst, is careless about evidence, always ready to shift the argument to prove his oracular prescience, reluctant to admit error, more concerned with the recovery of faith than with the discovery of truth. . . . As a *homo politicus* he is less than candid; as a prophet he was, and still is, in demand because he constantly provides a political anodyne in a dangerous world, where his own private unpuzzled vision of the communist wave of the future coincides with a universal longing for peace which induces many people to look at Soviet affairs through rose-coloured spectacles, thus assuaging their anxieties."

It was Deutscher who, having threatened me with a libel action, "did not dare" to sue me. I offered him the columns of *Survey* for a reply. But he preferred legal threat to open polemic. Nor did he answer in any other journal always ready to publish him.

MR TYERMAN suggests that I "did not dare to publish" my second article on Isaac Deutscher while he was still alive. As I have already explained, I harboured the idea of publishing the second part, but I could not act against legal advice; no editor would. I was indeed puzzled by what seemed a peculiarity of the libel law which (according to my lawyer's interpretation), would not deem the first part to be libellous, but might consider the publication of the second a libel, because, in spite of the fact that it was announced beforehand, it might suggest "a deliberate campaign to destroy Deutscher's reputation." For me it was not a question of "daring." I was simply not in a position to publish unless it could be done without legal hindrance. But I was not keen on wasting more time and money on legal consultations and thought that in any case the first part of my article had already deflated Deutscher's oracular pretensions. Therefore, although I still hoped to be able to publish the second part later, I decided not to pursue the matter. Whether he knew it or not, Deutscher, who "did not dare" to sue me for the first—published—part, prevented the appearance of the second he had not even seen.

As I wrote in my recent introduction, after Deutscher's death "I saw no point in engaging in posthumous polemics." But 11 years later, Deutscher's reputation is now a matter of history, and the article will, I trust, be a contribution to the understanding of the problems involved in writing on Soviet affairs.

LEOPOLD LABEDZ

Survey Magazine
London

"Can Politics be Untheatrical?"

FERDINAND MOUNT'S calm reiteration [ENCOUNTER, Letters, November 1978] almost persuades me. I find myself willingly agreeing that

> "a successful political utterance . . . must *to some extent* be influenced by the preconceptions of its audience and by the circumstances of its delivery in a way in which a successful scientific theory is not and must not be influenced. To this extent, it is theatrical and it is part of a conversation or a dialogue." (His emphasis.)

To some extent—yes. But the sense in which what he describes is a "dialogue" is a sense so journalistically loose and adulterated that it is hard to tell from mere "communication." And I cannot see much point in boldly introducing the subject of "theatre" as a "paradigm" for far-reaching theoretical speculation unless the exposition which follows shows more terminological rigour than this.

"There are two parties involved", he goes on. "Theatre audiences do answer back." They do indeed—*if and when they can*. But it is now 1979, and the characteristic form of face-to-face contact with their representatives experienced by most electors is neither that of the Agora, nor the Town Hall Meeting, nor even the multitudinous plebiscitory occasions staged by High Maoism in Tien-An-Men Square. (See "Caesarism in China" by Chalmers Johnson, ENCOUNTER, December 1976.) It consists of men and women in small rooms looking at TV. I suppose you can say that when they go out and vote, a week or so after tuning in to a political broadcast, they engage in a sort of "dialogue" with their representative. Certainly an exchange of information is taking place. But it seems to me that the models most appropriate for this sort of thing are those of systems theory and feedback circuitry—not the stage. I sympathise with Mr Mount's reluctance to be discussed in the company of such a dismaying collection of authors—what he calls that "grisly crew." Duty, not

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pleasure, drove me to it. But I cannot accept that he was press-ganged on to this ship of fools. His book leaves the strong impression that he walked up the gangway, unaided, by himself.

MY APOLOGIES to Mr Herb Greer (if, as he feels, I misrepresented his argument), along with my surprise at some of the statements he now makes. Does he really believe that the notion of Politics as Theatre is a rare "insight" which a responsible critic should solicitously allow to "rise to the top" while the "muddy nonsense" associated with it falls to the "silt" below? (The watery metaphor is his.) To me this insight looks much more like a cliché deserving no solicitude whatever. It may be found in scores of newspaper editorials and headlines everywhere. Over the years this cliché has been subject, not to the criticism it calls for, but to heedless elaboration; and in the face of claims by assorted couturiers—artistic, scientific, and political—that the theatrical metaphor shows an admirable degree of "fit", responsible critics may fairly show where the figurative costume is loose, where flesh is exposed, and where social reality shows embarrassingly through.

Mr Greer says that my "major slip" has been to deny "the value of ritual in protecting society from . . . ontological terror." If so it was indeed a most deliberate slip, since what he so complacently calls "the value of ritual" seems a pretty ambiguous value to me. True, it has its place among the lesser civilities; yet even at the ontological level of daily bathroom routine it seems to my old-fashioned way of thinking a matter for rueful acceptance rather than commendation, something to be endured rather than endorsed.

No: I do not assume that the words "false" and "irrational" are synonymous. (I'm not even sure they belong in the same logical universe together.) But yes: I

Malta: "a University in Ruins". . .

DEAR PRIME MINISTER: *In these last few weeks I have had plenty of time to consider the long letter which you were good enough to send me on 13 May, the draft bill on tertiary education of which your secretariat sent me a copy, and bits of information which I gathered from various sources. I did not like what I found. Increasingly, my position as an adviser of your government has become absurd and unbearable: to the inside, and notably to your government, I had intended to recommend reforms, but now find myself compelled to defend the university which is under such heavy pressure; to the outside I appear as one who shares responsibility for changes of tertiary education in Malta in which I do not believe. This impossible position must now be terminated.*

OBSERVERS have called it "a University in Ruins." A few months ago Prime Minister Dom Mintoff finally pushed his educational reorganisation through, and (according to the International Council on the Future of the University) now Malta "has two universities on paper, and none in reality. . . ." The last years have been crowded with plans and pressures, reforms and turbulent protests.

At the centre of controversy was Dr Ralf Dahrendorf, the Director of the London School of Economics, who served as a special adviser to Mintoff. In a letter to Dahrendorf (13 May 1978), Mintoff made his radical intransigence clear about a University from which "no true culture flowed . . . liberalism was suffocated by intransigent conservatism and medieval religious intolerance." Many students, vainly attempting to defend pragmatic reforms, were forced to emigrate. One eminent Malta academic said in his letter of resignation from the old University, established 200 years ago by the Knights of Malta ("aware of the fruitful and enormous benefits that result from properly instituted universities and gymnasia for the education of youth"), now a ruin of the *Atheneum Melitensis:* "It would not be right for me to help steer a ship on a route which I think is chartered to lead to shipwreck. . . ."

Now Dr Dahrendorf has also resigned, and we herewith publish his letter (dated 6 June 1978) to Prime Minister Mintoff.

My main objections to what is happening in Maltese tertiary education are simple:

1. *When I first came to the island eight years ago, I felt that the university needed to be nudged gently into the modern world. By that I meant, among other things, that training for the professions had to be complemented by teaching and research in the natural and social sciences as well as the humanities. It now emerges that the social sciences will not be developed, some professional courses will be moved elsewhere and discontinued and only a ruin of a university remains. Admittedly, such a ruin is better than a mere heap of rubble, but it is emphatically not what I intended, nor do I want to be identified with it.*

2. In the report of the Commission of which I was the chairman, we placed great emphasis on seeing the system of tertiary education in context. We thought that institutions of different character and objectives should be related to each other in mutually beneficial ways. The university, teachers training as it was then, and the college of advanced technology, all have a contribution to make. The proposal to turn the polytechnic into a "new university" (or rather, to change its name), does not achieve that purpose. I am sorry to use such strong language but this name change is in fact a joke, and not a good one. It will rob the island of a potential training place for managerial and semi-professional staff and not give it a new university.

3. *The draft legislation shows that it is now intended to introduce the so-called "worker-student scheme" as a general rule both in the polytechnic and the university. Your letter explains that this scheme means that young people will alternate between periods as students and as workers, the latter being unrelated to their subjects of study. Others elsewhere in the world have tried such schemes and failed. it produces either unhappy workers or underqualified students or both. It adds nothing to education, or to social integration. The best one can hope for is that the scheme will defeat itself, because it will not work:*

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do have a distinct feeling that political combinations of the false and the irrational are Not a Good Thing on the whole. Clearly, a realistic view of politics must recognise that a good deal of human emotion is necessary for issues to be raised, for policies to be advertised, and for elections to be won. But whatever goes beyond the reluctant recognition of these necessities in the direction of formal endorsement and enthusiastic approval, whatever legitimises emotionality *per se* (as the theatrical metaphor tends to do) does little, I feel, to secure a rational social order.

ROGER SANDALL

University of Sydney
Australia

. . . Dahrendorf to Mintoff

but I must disassociate myself from such plans in unambiguous terms.

4. The relation between government and universities is always precarious. Some countries, like Britain, have a long tradition of respecting the autonomy of universities, and as a consequence, have excellent places of teaching and research, sought after by students all over the world. Other countries, like Germany, have equally long traditions of interference, and it can probably be said that universities worked best when there was least interference, and deteriorated rapidly when, as in the Nazi period, governments tried to take charge. I am not unaware of the difficulties with which such a small university in a small country is faced; but the degree of direct government intervention which has become customary in Malta and which is now made explicit in the draft bill is bound to destroy the last remnants of quality in Maltese higher education. It is also, incidentally, quite contrary to the original recommendations of my Commission.

THESE POINTS and others force me to tell you now, *dear Prime Minister, that I cannot continue to advise you on higher education either informally or as a member of the Commission. I have always respected the rights of elected parliaments to introduce changes (although I have also hoped that parliaments will feel bound by written or unwritten fundamental rights which include the freedom of teaching and research). Outside the field of education, I have supported you and some of your policies where others have attacked them, and I see no reason to change my mind. But I cannot continue to be identified with policies in higher education which offend my values, are out of line with my experience, and contradict the recommendations which I have made in the past.*

Ralf Dahrendorf

P.S. So far we have conducted our discussions in private, indeed I have accepted public criticism without responding: but it would in my view not be appropriate or possible to keep this correspondence from public knowledge.

Toynbee & the Tune

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN happier had Mr Philip Toynbee, in his moving account of "Evensong at Peterborough Cathedral" (ENCOUNTER, October 1978) based his "hope that cathedral naves will be filled again for other ceremonies than a performance of *The Messiah* or Verdi's *Requiem*", a little less on Biblical scholastics.

True, the Wuerzburg Cathedral was filled to the vaults a Monday evening this September when Eugen Jochum conducted the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra in Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony*. Or, to take another example, a Friday evening this November when Haydn's *Harmoniemesse* and Bruckner's *Te Deum* were offered in concert form. The cathedral an inexpensive concert hall? If memory serves me right, there were no empty seats at 11 a.m. on All Saints Day when the frame for the mass was Britten's *Missa Brevis*: I know that the huge cloister church at Munsterschwarzach had not seats enough for those who attended St Hubert's Mass (hunters' horns) a Sunday evening this Fall. Turning (may I?) to the Lutheran Johanniskirche here, it is true that Bach's *B-minor Mass*, which opened the just concluded Bach festival in concert form (Saturday evening, November 25th) was sold out. But the next morning at the 10 o'clock service, with Bach's cantata "*My heart swims in blood*," there were no empty seats and a week later to the hour, with his cantata "*God alone shall have my heart*" (admittedly the soloist was Marga Hoeffgen) the church was filled. Yes, on other Sundays there are plenty of vacant seats. Why? Because, as T. S. Eliot reminds us,

Flesh and blood is weak and frail,
Susceptible to nervous shock. . . .

Scripture, only part-explained, tries our intellect too sorely. Or reworded: seminarians alone, cannot teach us, poor "creatures of earth and necessity", the Gospel. Well, would you expect to fathom *Parsifal* by just reading the "libretto"? Mr Toynbee's "song of true revival" by all means—but rather a Bach, a Bruckner, a Mozart, a huntsman's horn to teach us the tune.

HAROLD PORTER

Wuerzburg, Germany

Bettelheim's "Holocaust"

WHEN I tried to explain to an elderly person what Bruno Bettelheim says about the extermination of the Jews (ENCOUNTER, December) the only reaction was, after I had mentioned the author's name: "Oh, he is Jewish himself."

At first I was angry and sad; later I came to think about it as another form of "denial", the key-word of at least the first part of the article. Another person's reaction was: "The Jews have always been a set apart." This too, I think, can be called a form of "denial", for it seems to explain everything, it seems to be the final word about the whole problem.

It is remarkable that it is the *elderly* (75 years of age, and in excellent physical and mental condition) who should react in this way. I am not the only person of my generation (I was born in 1941) who is preoccupied with the overall question: How could it happen, and what did we (that is, our parents) do?

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This article provides one not with sensational facts—although I did not know anything about President Roosevelt's attitude—but with information to find an explanation, even if a tentative one.

H. BERKHOUT

Dag Hammarskjoldlaan
Castricum
Netherlands

AUTHORS

Clive Sinclair is doing research on Yiddish literature at the University of East Anglia. His "Conversation with Isaac Bashevis Singer" appeared in the February issue of ENCOUNTER; his study of *The Brothers Singer* will be published in the autumn by Allison & Busby, who this spring bring out a volume of his short stories, *Hearts of Gold*.

George Urban's recent books include *Détente* (1976) and *Hazards of Learning* (1977). A collection of his conversations on Euro-Communism, including those with Altiero Spinelli and Lucio Lombardo Radice (ENCOUNTER, January 1978 and May 1977), were published last autumn by Maurice Temple Smith under the title *Eurocommunism: Its Roots and Future in Italy and Elsewhere*.

Michael Shepherd's "The Psycho-Historians" is a modified version of a paper delivered to the Sections of History of Medicine and Psychiatry of the Royal Society of Medicine.

Martin Esslin is Professor of Drama, Stanford University, and from 1963-77 was Head of Radio Drama at the BBC. He is the author of many works on theatre—among the most recent are *An Anatomy of Drama* (Temple Smith, 1976) and *Artaud* (John Calder, Fontana 1976)—and is editor of *Beckett*, an anthology of critical essays (Prentice-Hall, 1966).

Benedict Nightingale is Theatre Critic for the *New Statesman*, and the author of *Charities* (Allen Lane, 1973).

Alan Brownjohn's latest volume of poems, *A Song of Good Life*, was published by Secker & Warburg (1975).

William Letwin is Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics. His books include *The Origins of Scientific Economics* (Methuen, 1963) and *Law and Economic Policy in America* (Edinburgh University Press, 1968). ENCOUNTER published in the March 1976 issue his Introduction to the Everyman Library reissue of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*.

Walter Laqueur is Chairman of the International Research Council of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Director of the Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library in London. He is editor of *The Washington Papers* and co-editor of the *Journal of Contemporary History*. Among his books are *Out of the Ruins of Europe* (1971), *Weimar* (1974), *Guerrilla* (Weidenfeld, 1976), and he is the editor of *The Terrorism Reader* and *The Guerrilla Reader* (Wildwood House, 1979, 1978). His article on "Karl Heinzen" appeared in the July 1977 issue of ENCOUNTER.

Stanislaw Baranczak (b. 1946) is a leading Polish poet. His first book, *Proof-reading the Face* (*Korekta twarzy*, 1968), was followed by two further volumes of poetry and three works of literary criticism, but a long poem, "Artificial Respiration", and two books of essays have been stopped by the censor. Baranczak was one of the founders of the Workers Defence Committee, following the mass workers' demonstrations in June 1976. He faces a total ban on his writings and is denied an exit visa for the States, where he wishes to take up a chair in Polish language and literature at Harvard. The poem published here has appeared in the uncensored Polish language literary quarterly *Zapis*, of which typed copies circulate in Poland, and translations of his work have been published by *Index on Censorship*.

Ryszard Krynicki (b. 1943) is a Polish poet and translator. He has had difficulties with censorship throughout his relatively short literary career. In 1975 his book of poems *A Collective Unit* (*Organizm zbiorowy*) eventually appeared, with numerous textual changes and several items excluded. These censored poems, openly political, were published in *Zapis*. A new volume of his poems has been rejected as "thematically unsuitable" by the official Polish publishing house.

WE NOTE, *with sadness and deep regret, the passing of* ENCOUNTER *contributors and friends in 1978:*

NICOLAS BENTLEY
KOFI BUSIA
ROGER CAILLOIS
MICHAEL JOSSELSON
JOHN MACKINTOSH
SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA
JOHN MANDER
NICOLAS NABOKOV
BENEDICT NICOLSON
IGNAZIO SILONE
BENJAMIN SONNENBERG
PAMELA WARBURG

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London

SAVED: *I wish to protest [Geoffrey Gorer writes] against the use of the word "saved" when you mean "retained in England". In today's paper there is the headline* "De la Mare Papers *Saved"; and the same inaccurate term has frequently been used in connexion with the Stubbs paintings of Warwick Castle. It is inaccurate as well as discourteous to suggest that these papers and paintings would have been in any peril if they went to their American purchasers; they would probably have been better looked after and would certainly have been as available to interested scholars.*

THE TIMES

Washington, D.C.

FRUITFUL: 'Between 1973 and 1975 we had the deepest banana that we had in 35 years, and yet inflation dipped only very briefly." The economist Alfred Kahn, who heads the administration's task force against inflation, has taken to using "banana" for the word "recession." The reason, he amiably explains, is that references to recessions seem to make people nervous and irritable. He hardly needs to add that one of the people made most irritable is his employer, President Carter.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

Liverpool

TABULA RASA: *A Scottish artist, William Turnbull, painted a blank canvas white as his entry in the eleventh John Moores art exhibition in Liverpool and took a prize of £3,000.*

Eyebrows were raised when the painting was unwrapped as the 80 inch by 60 inch canvas was simply painted white with almost invisible palette strokes on it. The instructions on the back of the entry did little to help the staff who were responsible for hanging the painting because the artist had written "top" on opposing edges.

Turnbull, 56, who has exhibited all over the world, explained: "The back of the picture has 'top' written on two sides because basically both experiences are correct. It is not gravitationally orientated. It can be hung vertically or horizontally. . . .

"A lot of my work has ambiguity—a special switch. Are you looking down or across? It may have something to do with my flying experiences in the war. . . ." One of the judges said . . . "I would prefer not to say why we chose this work. Suffice it to say that Turnbull is one of the major artists in the world today and any city could count themselves lucky to have one of his paintings in their gallery."

Mr Turnbull said: "My painting is definitely not a joke. I painted it in a completely sincere way and quite frankly I do not know what all the fuss is about.

Mr John Moores, the football pools millionaire who puts up the £12,000 prize money said yesterday: "Having appointed a distinguished jury I accept their decision. If I had been judge this year I would not have chosen Mr Turnbull's painting for the second prize because it is not my cup of tea, but I do not pretend to be an expert on modern art."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Peking

"PURGE": "Purge" is still the key word in China despite the political weeding out.

The People's Daily **said: "Certain members of leading groups are implicated in the conspiratorial activities of the Gang of Four and still have not been investigated." Others were political waverers, still under the "spiritual yoke" of the Gang of Four.**

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESS

London

BOOKMANSHIP: *In his introduction to his choice of reference books, Frank Muir confesses his delight in making out little booklists for all manner of reasons—such as "Books to Read on a Plane," "Books to Read in Hospital."*

"I even," writes Muir "have a list of Books to Place Beside the Bedside of a Visitor Whom You Hope to Get Rid of as Soon as Possible."

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Westminster

GOLDEN POETRY: *The royalties from Shakespeare's works would have paid off the National Debt if copyright had not expired, Lord [Ted] Willis, the author and playwright, said in the Lords yesterday in a debate on poets and poetry.*

Lord Willis called for private and industrial sponsorship of poetry—for the poet was as important to society as the engineer, the carpenter, or, indeed, the politician. The poet's vision was unique and went deeper than that of politicians, businessmen and sociologists in voicing people's fears, hopes, tragedies and pleasures. Crack-pot theories and weird sects could seize the minds of millions. Poets could provide the counter-balance.

Lord Mackie of Benshie (Lib.) said Scotland still used its national day to celebrate Burns. It was an occasion which was mixed with the desire to enjoy strong drink.

Lord Ritchie-Calder (Lab.) said that if we could collect Burns royalties from Russia we would have no need of North Sea oil.

Lord Milford, the only Communist peer, rated the role of poets as more important than spending on arms which were soon out of date.

Lord Davies of Leek (Lab.) said there was need for more poetry. "Man must have time to stand and stare."

Viscount Barrington (Lab.) said it was not possible for a poet to be a professional. It was essentially an amateur activity.

Lord Gowrie, a Front Bench Opposition spokesman, suggested that the Foreign Office should consider sending poets to overseas embassies as a kind of "alternate ambassador."

If we valued our poets we must see they got more money.

PARLIAMENTARY REPORTS

London

CLARITY: Clearly "clearly" is in an ongoing situation as a vacuous vogue word. Clearly has replaced obviously, which long ago replaced manifestly.

THE TIMES

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Oxford University Press

John Masefield: A Life

Constance Babington Smith

'Miss Babington Smith has happily not chosen to build in the modern monumental style; her biography is a more modest, more civilized, more domestic edifice.' *The T.L.S.* '. . . . this careful, balanced biography.' *Daily Telegraph.* Illustrated £6.50

After Kilvert

A. L. Le Quesne

'The author reveals a fine eye for natural beauty and a poetic imagination as well as good judgement and knowledge of the Victorian age. The book will delight all admirers of Kilvert.' *Raymond Mortimer.* 'A unique and fascinating book.' *John Sparrow.* Illustrated £5.95

Turgenev: His Life and Times

Leonard Schapiro

Turgenev's times were rich and varied: this book explores the complexities of an extraordinary man against the turbulent background of nineteenth-century Russian society. It makes use of much recently published material and hitherto unknown letters made available by Pauline Viardot's heirs. Illustrated £7.95

Aleksandr Blok: A Biography

Volume I: The Distant Thunder (1880–1908)

Avril Pyman

The great Russian poet Aleksandr Blok lived through a period of tremendous change, to which he bore unique and eloquent witness. This first critical biography to be published in any language is the product of fifteen years' research into Russian sources: a second volume will complete it. Illustrated £12.50

The Low Countries 1780-1940

E. H. Kossmann

This history of Belgium and the Netherlands is the first major study in English to treat them as nations in their own right, while placing them in a wider European and world context. Stress is laid on the profound ideological divisions within both countries, and on the connections between the ideas and realities of politics and society. £15 *The Oxford History of Modern Europe*

Death in Paris 1795-1801

Richard Cobb

The Basse-Geôle de la Seine was the predecessor of the Paris Morgue: to it were brought the corpses of all who had suffered a violent death in the riverside districts. From its records, Richard Cobb has recreated the dangers and passions of life amongst poor and ordinary people: like all his books, this one celebrates the variety and dignity of human life whatever its circumstances. £4.95

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